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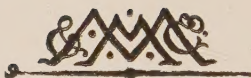


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# FAITH AND FREEDOM



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# FAITH AND FREEDOM

BEING CONSTRUCTIVE ESSAYS IN THE  
APPLICATION OF MODERNIST PRINCIPLES  
TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

BY

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## PREFACE

IN August, 1916, the little book called "Faith or Fear?" was published under my editorship. It brought kindly letters to its Editor from Clergymen and laymen in many parts of the world, expressing a desire for a more detailed exposition of the way in which those who plead for a re-statement of the faith do in fact state the faith for themselves, and teach it to others. There was evidence that everywhere men were feeling at a loss. Old forms and formularies had for them largely become empty of meaning: yet never was there a greater realisation of the need of vital faith, or a more resolute desire to seek for it.

So at length I decided that I must do what I could, aided as before by others of a like mind, to outline a more adequate answer to the various questions raised by different correspondents and reviewers than was possible in a series of letters to individual men and women.

One of the contributors to "Faith or Fear?" had in the meantime tackled the fundamental question of the nature of Providence in the little volume called "Providence and Faith," by W. S. Palmer (Macmillan

& Co.), a book which has, I have reason to know, helped to strengthen and re-create the faith of not a few thoughtful readers perplexed by the profoundest of all the problems raised by the war.

In the Introductory Essay to that book I alluded to a rather more ambitious volume than in contemplation, by some members of the "Faith or Fear?" group, and others. It was the volume of Essays now offered which I had then prospectively in mind.

Whether our own admittedly partial and tentative efforts at re-statement go any way towards meeting the need or not, at least it is even clearer now than it was when "Faith or Fear?" was published that the need of some re-statement is urgent.

The inability of most of the official leaders of the Church to attempt any re-statement of the faith themselves is not surprising to anyone who knows what a modern bishop's life is like. But it is the more unfortunate that they have for the most part failed to countenance any genuine attempt by others, who have more leisure for reading and thought, or even to admit that there is need or room for any re-statement at all.

For outside the official Church there is plentiful evidence of a repentance—a change of mind—that is profound. Not only is a new attitude shown in many independently written books, it is everywhere revealing itself among the common people—the kind of people who heard Christ gladly of old. He who cannot feel the tremendous transformation which is taking place in the popular mind in regard to religious and social questions must surely be beyond the reach of movement. You

can feel it, if you can feel anything, even as you teach your children in school or as you talk to casual people in the train. You can feel it, gathering force, among the troops stationed at home and especially among wounded soldiers back from the Front. The indifference to truth which has so often and so disastrously hindered the free course of the living Word of God within the official Church has not been able to check its course in the greater Church without.

The fate of Christianity is not in doubt. The Kingdom of God is at hand. And no member of the Church of England, least of all a priest whose whole heart is in his work, can allow himself to believe that it is wrong for him to attempt to share the life and movement he perceives, or too late for his Church to aid and direct it by corporate action.

In regard to the scope and method of this book a word or two ought to be said. There are several ways in which a joint work may be produced. There is what may be called "the Cumnor Method," of which notable examples are to be found in "Concerning Prayer" and "Immortality." There the contributors met together in conference and attempted to find, by prayer and discussion and mutual criticism, something in the nature of the expression of a common mind and purpose. That method has very much to commend it, but it could not be the method of this book, if for no other reason than because the various contributors were unable to meet together at all. The method of "Faith and Freedom" as of "Faith or Fear?" is simply that, as Editor, I invited various authors, who, in spite of many differences from one

another, shared already a certain common outlook, to write, in complete independence, upon several subjects of vital importance, and upon which I felt that they would have something suggestive and valuable to say. Where one contributor expressed the desire to read any other contribution, a copy was sent to him ; where I felt that I should like to ask for the criticism of certain other members of the group upon any particular Essay I have done so. *But no contributor has any responsibility at all for any Essay but his, or her, own.* In so far, therefore, as community of mind may be discovered in the Essayists, it is because it already existed rather than because it was deliberately sought during the actual writing of the book. I ought to add that it had been my original intention to include at least one Essay on the attitude of the Church towards the aspirations of Labour, but the ground covered was already so wide that it seemed better not to attempt to add another great subject to those already touched upon.

The actual work of writing and editing has not been easy. Mr. Raven's Essay on *The Holy Spirit* was written under conditions of quite unusual difficulty. My own parish has been subjected not only to exceptionally frequent air-raids, but also to occasional bombardments from the sea, and in addition to my parochial duties I have had the spiritual care of various bodies of troops stationed here from time to time, who have naturally claimed a large amount of my time. In these circumstances I should never have undertaken the work at all, or have been able to carry it through, except under the overwhelming sense of the urgency



of the present need and the consequent duty of those who have strong convictions to express them fearlessly. And the drawbacks I have mentioned have some compensation for me in the knowledge that at least no one can justly charge us with having written our Essays in an academic atmosphere. The convictions I myself hold and have tried to express have been deepened by the close contact it has been my privilege to have for the past four years with large numbers of men from all parts of the country.

In conclusion I wish to acknowledge the kindness of many friends who have helped us with their criticisms and in the work of reading the proofs, and in particular to thank the Editors of the *Harvard Theological Review* for the permission they so readily gave for the republication of the Essay by Mr. Fawkes on "The Development of Christian Institutions and Beliefs."

C. H. S. M.



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I

THROUGH FAITH TO FREEDOM

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

By CHARLES H. S. MATTHEWS, M.A.

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Australian Bush," etc. ; Contributor to "Concerning Prayer" ;  
Editor of "Faith or Fear?" etc.*



## SYNOPSIS

- I. The true knowledge of God is the only cure for the world's evil.

Everywhere men are thinking about God, but their thinking is hampered by the confused traditions of the Church.

They are ready to welcome any sincere teaching which takes into account modern knowledge.

Upholders of tradition are apt to fear the destructiveness of truth, but truth destroys only idolatries.

Everywhere there is a demand on the part of the laity for truth. Therefore the present clerical tendency to concentrate upon social reform, on the ground that the collapse of determinism means the security of traditionalism, does not meet the needs of the time.

- II. The object of the earlier Essays in this book is to discuss some of the great ideas of religion, and attempt to restate them in the light of modern evolutionary knowledge.

The idea of God is "an endless growing idea."

The old doctrines concerning Creation, Incarnation, Atonement and the Holy Spirit have all gained new meaning and depth in the light of evolutionary ideas.

III. There is the same need for restatement in the sphere of the ecclesiastical conception of moral law and of Church order.

The later Essays in this book deal with subjects of this nature.

Our one need is the faith of little children.



## THROUGH FAITH TO FREEDOM

### I

THERE is no cure for the evil of the world but a true knowledge of God. To know God is to live; to know God is to possess, or rather be possessed by, the creative power of that Love which is able to triumph over evil by bringing forth from it a greater good. To know God is to overcome the world and find that the grave has been robbed of its apparent victory. In the fellowship of an increased knowledge of God is to be found the only real hope for the rebuilding of society upon a surer foundation than that which, in our own time, has crumbled away. In such a sure-founded fellowship lies the only prospect of a true and enduring peace.

Everywhere men are beginning to realise this. I saw the other day an extract from a letter written by an officer at the front. "After a few months' experience of conditions out here," he said, "I think a good many people have come to the conclusion that there is only one thing worth living for, only one thing worth thinking about—and that is God." And everywhere this "thinking about God" is hindered and hampered by the confused traditions reflected in official state-

ments about religion. It is this which is largely responsible for the combination in so many men's minds of a longing for truth and righteousness and beauty, or, in a word, for God, and a feeling of strong resentment against the Churches. Nothing can ever do so much harm in the world as the offer to men, in God's name, by those who claim to be His specially appointed messengers, of a doctrine of God which men more or less clearly see to be false.

It is easy to understand the strong indignation which Jesus felt and expressed against those, and only those, who as a class were so insensible to true values that, while in the name of God they stressed unimportant observances, they so neglected weightier matters as actually to hinder men from coming to a truer knowledge of the living God—blind leaders of the blind, making the living Word of God of none effect through their traditions.

Men want something more than a tradition that has become for them the empty form in which men of other ages have tried to explain their apprehension, under other conditions of life and knowledge, of the living God. They would rather have an honest attempt, however inadequate, to express a genuine experience of our own day than the most eloquent exposition of the established orthodoxy by a man who shows no signs of having himself wrestled with God for the truth he has to proclaim. That is the real reason why a book like Mr. Wells's "God the Invisible King" has a sale and arouses an interest among the laity which no book by any officer of the Church could hope to rival. It is a book peculiarly easy to criticise.

Its philosophy and its theology are astonishingly inadequate, but it is obviously the sincere utterance of a man who speaks out of a real and vivid experience of the living God, and therefore it commands attention in a world where men, however blindly, are seeking the living God.

So what men ask for in those who profess to teach is, I think, first of all the frankness of sincerity; the genuine utterance of a truth seen, however dimly, from within, and not merely learnt by rote, from without. Secondly, they cannot be content with any doctrine which seems to them to be out of relation with their own lives. This means that men have a strengthening conviction that the living God did not, as traditional teaching so often at least seems to assume, cease at a particular date in the past to reveal Himself in this changing world. Indeed I think it is true to say that they begin to realise that God must at all times and everywhere be revealing Himself to those who are seeking Him, that this revelation is only restricted by the degree of man's capacity for the reception of the truth, and that therefore as he seeks to learn more and more of the truth it is possible for him to come to an ever fuller knowledge of God. This indeed is what the Christian religion claims. On the one hand it asserts that God did wholly and completely express Himself as man in the past, making manhood His own in Jesus Christ; and, on the other, that the living Spirit of God and of Jesus Christ is ever in the world to guide men into all truth; that is to say into an ever fuller and deeper apprehension of God.

So men are asking for a new synthesis—a religion

which conserves all the truth men learnt of old and relates it to all that men have since discovered. And every attempt to respond to this need of men involves the task of disentangling the essential element of truth from its temporary forms. There is a constant tendency in the human mind to an idolatrous externalism, the worship of the ancient form because of the truth it once for a time and place expressed.

Every attempt at new and constructive expression of the truth must needs be at the same time destructive. And it is the universal experience of reformers that they are met by the cry that their work is no more than destructive. It was a charge brought again and again against the Christians' Lord that He had come to destroy ancient sanctities, and it was a charge which He emphatically repudiated—"Think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets. I am come not to destroy but to fulfil." Yet that which was the true fulfilment of ancient truth did in very deed destroy the ancient forms. It was impossible for the old wine-skins to contain the new wine. And so it is in every age. "The disciple is not above his Master nor the servant above his Lord." Every attempt to restate the truth is met with the same charge—that it is destructive, not constructive. And in so far as that charge is true it is due to the very nature of truth. "Destruction," it has been well said,<sup>1</sup> "must always be the effect of any new truth or new impulse; but what it destroys is man's idolatries, not man himself."

<sup>1</sup> Collingwood, "Religion and Philosophy," Macmillan & Co., p. 159.

If Christianity proves anything it is that you can destroy error, but that truth is essentially eternal and immortal. And for this reason you can no more "construct" the truth than you can destroy it. The most man can do is to discover truth, to set it free, to break down the man-built barriers which prevent it from being spread abroad.

This was the purpose of those who contributed to "Faith or Fear?"—of which the present book is a sequel. That book did indeed receive a welcome, especially in the secular Press, which astonished its writers, although, very naturally, certain clerical reviewers, defending their traditional position, attacked it on the ground of its supposed destructiveness of the Catholic Faith.

This criticism on their part was inevitable, and certainly it was not unexpected; but there was another sense in which, as used by some of our more friendly critics, it had more justification. The object of our book was rather to plead for a fresh temper and attitude in the Church than to set forth a positive re-statement or re-interpretation of the faith.

For this reason it was natural that certain critics should ask in effect whether we could tell them explicitly what are the fundamental principles underlying our appeal, and give at all events some outline of the way in which, on those principles, we should now express our own faith in Christ.

One critic in particular—the writer of a most thoughtful review in *The Westminster Gazette*—said that we did not attempt to deal with the fundamental problems of the average modern man. "What is required to

meet the case," he affirmed, "is less a new theology than a new philosophy of religion. Thinking man needs some account of the nature of God and His relation to the Universe which is not avowedly self-stultifying according to rational tests; some facing of the problems of evil which does not take refuge in a pious hope that it is somehow good, some elucidation of the hope of human survival which is not merely an appeal to faith or personal conviction. For good or evil, the fact has to be faced that thousands of men and women are now for the first time in their lives seething with these problems, and that the ecclesiastical method of assuming them all to be easy, simple and long ago settled by authority fills them with impatience. A Church which is to minister to these people and to give them the spiritual religion for which they crave must have among its teachers, philosophers, thinkers, men of insight and daring, with a mission to the Gentiles who are in difficulty about the presuppositions of religion."

There is profound truth in these words, and it is a truth which there is special need for the Church and its leaders to face. For, unfortunately, there is a strong tendency apparent in the Church just now to think that the clergy can leave ultimate problems alone and concentrate upon social and ecclesiastical reform. The recent Lenten Pastoral Letter of Cardinal Bourne seems to show that the latest policy of the Roman Catholic Church is to put social reconstruction in the forefront of its programme, in the hope that a progressive policy in this direction may disguise the fundamentally reactionary attitude of the Papacy on



all purely theological no less than on all philosophical, scientific, and political questions. The same tendency is noticeable in our own Church. Even *The Challenge*, which is acknowledged to be the most courageous and open-minded of the Church of England weekly papers, and is always ready to defend the comprehensiveness of the Church of England against those who would attack it, occasionally adopts the attitude that we may regard fundamental questions of thought as already settled, or comfortably settling themselves, in the orthodox direction, and go on to deal with practical matters, such as the Life and Liberty movement within the Church, and Social Reform without.

No one who has read "Faith or Fear?"—no one who reads this book—will, I hope, accuse me or my colleagues of indifference to these practical questions. Our whole philosophy is one of movement and progress. We are deeply anxious for social reform, and some of us, at all events, are equally anxious for the Church to reform itself in such external matters as the better administration of its revenues, the introduction of a more democratic method of government, and the revision of its services. But we are convinced that if the Church is to be, as it should be, primarily religious, it needs in the first place to revise its theology and rethink its philosophy. There are some folk who frankly take the line that the average Englishman despises thought, and that therefore the Church need not bother about its intellectual statements. What men want, they say, is to be told plainly exactly what they have got to believe. They are perfectly willing to accept a plain statement of traditional Catholic doctrine, they

do not want to be puzzled about problems of thought, and so forth.

We believe this attitude to be ultimately as fatal to the life of the Church as it is cynical and faithless. It is, of course, true that owing to the inefficiency of our educational systems—both elementary and secondary—there are vast numbers of men who have never been encouraged to use their minds. It is equally true that a large number of Englishmen are intellectually slothful. But for all that we agree with the writer in *The Westminster Gazette* that there never was a time when more people were thinking hard about the most fundamental problems. And the Church which shows no interest in the movement of thought will certainly sooner or later find that it is powerless to win men. They will not assent to obsolete statements of doctrine for the sake of gaining the support of the Church in matters of social reform.

But, it may be said,—it often is said by the clergy—the battle is already won. All the intellectual bogeys have been laid. Science has become humble and no longer professes a deterministic creed, against which Christianity must needs enter the lists. We have escaped from the bondage of the Victorian age into the glorious liberty of the Chestertonian era. Because the reality of freedom has been demonstrated by modern philosophy we may believe anything we choose to believe without let or hindrance. Anything may have happened in the past, anything may happen in the future. There is good literary warrant for the belief that a pumpkin was once turned into a coach and four. The notable tradition that on another

occasion a cat developed unusual musical powers, a cow performed equally unusual athletic feats, and a dish and spoon eloped together, has been firmly held by many generations of children. Science cannot assert that any of these things are impossible. It is not for science to say what is possible or impossible. A childlike faith will accept without question these ancient traditions, and assert that everything did happen just as it is recorded to have happened, in this "world of loose ends" where anything may happen at any moment.

On this theory, we need never be surprised if we go into our garden and pick a cabbage leaf to find that we can make an apple-pie of it. For we are living in the Great Panjandrum's world, if only we would recognise it. So we are free to accept without question whatever is preached to us in the name of the Church. It is as unscientific as it is impious to express doubts about recorded miracles. To do so is to show oneself hopelessly out of date—and so on and so forth.

Now, whatever else is to be said about this theological libertinism, this at least is certain, that it is merely a violent reaction from determinism and is almost equally far from the truth. And this being so, whatever its temporary success among those of the clergy and the literary laity who are of a type of mind to which all science is a sealed book, it can only provoke another reaction in its turn. We have but to look abroad at the present day to see how fatally easy it is to discredit freedom in freedom's name.

The plain truth is that the whole thought of mankind has been transformed by the great increase of scientific

knowledge. Even the thought of the Church has been changed in spite of itself, so that no one to-day really believes everything that "has always been believed in the Catholic Church," however eagerly he may claim to do so. But the official Church has entirely failed to meet the situation. In the sphere of apologetics it has sewn odds and ends of new cloth on to its old garments, and the rents have been made worse.

You find, for instance,<sup>1</sup> an Oxford don contending that the law of gravitation is "temporarily neutralised" whenever a catch is made at cricket, and an enthusiastic bishop asserting that the Almighty wrapped the atmosphere round the earth in order to prevent men from being whisked off its surface by the rapidity of its revolution! And these gentlemen imagine that by statements such as these they are defending the faith. Certainly the educated world marvels when it reads such statements, and the militant rationalist chuckles with delight. Meanwhile, thoughtful men of good will, seekers after truth, turn away in despair from a Church in which such men are teachers.

The only hope for the Church lies in a genuine attempt to interpret the great articles of the Creed in the full light of evolutionary knowledge. Each one of the pseudo-scientific statements quoted above—and they are only random instances typical of innumerable clerical utterances—reveals ideas, whether concerning the divine nature, or the true nature of the Universe, or what is meant by the "uniformity of nature," or, last but not least, the true nature of man himself,

<sup>1</sup> The first edition of this book included here a statement about a Mirfield priest which is now withdrawn as incorrect. Its insertion, due to a misunderstanding, is regretted.

which are no longer tenable in the light of new knowledge and critical thought. There is a remarkable passage in an essay from the pen of a brilliant thinker, who recently laid down his life in France, to whose friendship and teaching the present writer owes more than he can ever say, which is worth transcribing at length in this connection. "Creation and Incarnation, Redemption and Judgment—these great expressions of God's relation to the world—have intellectual and moral meaning just in so far as they are understood as variations on the one theme of the love of God, and the power and the wisdom which are contained in it, the presence and the promise of the Kingdom of Heaven. So long as it was thought that Creation was complete and fixed, this Kingdom too was conceived to be a new Jerusalem coming down from Heaven complete and adorned as a bride—the finished climax of a catastrophic judgment and recreation. But to us has been opened out the vision of a gradual growth and advance towards a spiritual goal. The love of God is complete and absolute, but the building of the kingdom is a gradual process of evolution and growing apocalypse. Official and corporate religion has refused to become consciously evolutionary, and so it had almost ceased to be relevantly apocalyptic. Men have spoken of progressive revelation and progressive creation but as though we were set in a God-driven train rolling with fixed speed towards a destined end, and as though our part were limited to being of good behaviour on the way. But the doctrine of the Incarnation means that to man himself is entrusted the work of creation as well as the never-failing oppor-

tunity to repair what he has made amiss. The Kingdom of God which is within us is the permanent possibility of an evolution and progress which is straightforward, not losing itself in by-ways or returning back upon itself, where advance is not always balanced by degeneration.”<sup>1</sup>

## II

Our object, then, is to indicate the directions in which modern ways of thinking seem to us to have made traditional views impossible; or rather to re-state or re-interpret some of the great truths of the Church in a form in which they seem no longer to conflict with what God has taught us in our own age and generation. This is the aim of the earlier Essays in the present book.

The first of these Essays shows plainly enough the complete contrast between the idea of development commonly held among Catholics and the real development actually seen in the life and history of Christian institutions and beliefs. It is of course possible to criticise in detail the contentions of the writer, but it is surely increasingly evident that there can be no compromise between those who take their stand upon a real and those who will admit nothing beyond a logical development. We believe that if the official representatives of the Church will not frankly accept the former view with all its implications they will simply be left behind in a stagnant backwater almost

<sup>1</sup> See Essay, “Faith, Prayer, and the World’s Order,” by A. C. Turner, p. 430, in “Concerning Prayer.” (Macmillan & Co.)



wholly isolated from the onward-moving current of the world's and the Church's true life.

On the other hand, when once this idea is ungrudgingly admitted, when once you grant the principle of real development, which is a creative evolution, you are bound to go on and apply it to the whole body of Church doctrine.

In particular you are bound to abandon ideas about God and man inherited from an age when the Bible was held to be verbally inspired, when far less was known about God or the nature of man himself than is known to-day.

Indeed the Bible itself is seen to record a central example of the principle of evolution in religion. A true development is there recorded, and that development is illuminated for us to-day by those parallel developments in other religions to which the comparative study of religions has introduced us.

And as modern thought illuminates the pages of the Bible, and the Bible confirms the several conclusions of modern thought, we come to see that, as a modern philosopher puts it,

“ The human idea of God or of perfection is, as Locke said in an apt phrase of our idea of infinity, ‘ an endless growing idea,’ one which grows with man's own growth, acquiring fresh content from every advance in knowledge or in goodness, opening up fresh heights and depths to him who presses honestly forward ; but he who penetrates farthest will be the last to say that he has attained. We are never at the goal, but as we move, the direction in which it lies becomes more and more definite. The movement and the



direction imply the goal ; they define it sufficiently for our human purposes ; and in direct experience we are never at a loss to know what is higher and what is lower, what is better and what is worse.”<sup>1</sup>

And this growing idea of God necessarily involves a new conception of the meaning of Creation.<sup>2</sup> The idea of creation as having taken place at a moment in time is no longer credible. The idea, still common among the clergy, that all that is involved in an acceptance of evolutionary doctrine is the pushing back of that moment from the date assigned to it by Archbishop Usher, recorded in the margins of many editions of the Authorised Version of the Bible—4004 B.C.—to a date some millions of years earlier, is hopelessly inadequate.

The whole traditional idea of the Creator is bound up with the early Hebrew conception of a purely transcendent God. It is the realisation of this which has led so many, by reaction, to the equally false idea of a purely immanent God. And theologians who have of late tried to safeguard the truth by maintaining both the transcendence and the immanence of God have generally done so in such a way as to lead one to suppose that they regarded them as two contradictory principles somehow harmonised in God, or as separate faculties operating on different occasions. But all the while they have missed the enrichment which modern thought brings to the idea of creation by revealing it as a fact of the present as well as of all the past.

<sup>1</sup> “The Idea of God in Modern Philosophy,” by A. Seth Pringle-Pattison, LL.D., D.C.L., Clarendon Press, p. 248 f.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Essay II.

This radical transformation and enrichment of the ancient idea of creation applies equally to all the other great doctrines of the Church. The doctrines of the Incarnation, and of the Atonement, and of the Holy Spirit<sup>1</sup> have all gained in meaning, depth, and present power in the light of the frank acceptance of evolutionary teaching.

Everywhere we have reached a deeper sacramentalism, because life has been shown to be a growing unity of which religion alone is the secret and the unifying principle. And at the same time our true goal and the method by which it is to be attained have been, and are being, revealed to us with increasing clearness. For the new revelation of God is equally a new revelation of the true nature of man.

The old teaching of Athanasius that God became man in order that we might become God takes on a new and deeper meaning. The historic Incarnation is seen in a new way to be linked on to the whole life of God and man. And so our faith in man and his capabilities grows *pari passu* with our faith in God, and we gain an infinite new hope as we learn to face, in ever deepening fellowship, the problems of the world. Knowing God not as a mere name but as a reality, finding our world in Him and His living presence in all the living world of to-day, as Creator, Redeemer, Inspirer, and Judge, realising His omnipotence, not as a traditional attribute, but as the present power of Love, completely active and completely revealed in the unceasing transformation of the world's evil into good, we are at once convicted of past faithlessness,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Essays IV, V, and VI.

of the sin of ignoring His presence, and of trusting in the idols of the mind rather than in Him. At the same time love sets us free from all our faithless fears, and we set out with renewed hope upon the adventurous task of helping to recreate the world in the light of our vision of the Kingdom of God.

### III

The same transformation and enrichment which has taken place, or is taking place, in regard to the doctrines of the Church naturally cannot be confined to the sphere of doctrine only.

If indeed it is the very movement of life itself which has effected the transformation in this sphere, that same movement must be found in every department of the Church's life. Everywhere we must scrutinise those traditions which we ourselves have accepted in the past, with a desire to discriminate between that which is still living and of unchanging validity and that which, whatever its value for an earlier age, has lost its meaning and reality for us. Over and over again we are met in religious controversy by arguments—in regard to questions, for instance, of Church order or morality—which seem logical and conclusive, until we examine the premisses from which they start or the underlying assumptions which are all the while taken for granted. But when we do examine these we are often startled to find how slight is the foundation for the immense superstructure it is believed to support.

We need especially to examine with the closest attention the claim often made on behalf of the Church to enforce a series of moral enactments, selected, more or less arbitrarily, from among equally definite sayings of Christ to which the same literal method is not applied.<sup>1</sup>

And in this region also we have need for a genuine change in the official and corporate mind of the Church. We need to reconsider with open minds such theories as those of the Apostolic Succession, trusting in the Spirit of Truth to guide us into all truth.<sup>2</sup> It is our duty to think out again the whole question of the relation of our own Church to other Christian bodies<sup>3</sup> and to scrutinise with the utmost care every accepted theory which stands in the way of Christian unity. Above all we need to ask whether everything we have learnt of existence as a whole, manifesting itself in an infinite variety of forms,—an organic whole, gathering up into its own greater life the separate lives of numberless individuals and smaller societies,—does not give us a richer conception of Catholic Christianity than the dead and barren uniformity which has too often in the past been held up as an ideal.

Lastly—perhaps it should rather have come first, for the hope of the Church lies not with the old but with the young—we need fearlessly to apply the principle of true development in all our religious teaching, and especially in our teaching of the Bible.<sup>4</sup> It is the strongest condemnation of our old methods that there are thousands of our young people who think of the Bible as a dull book. It can only be dull if it is taught

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Essay VII.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Essay VIII.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Essay IX.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Essay X.

as a book standing by itself, in no need of the illumination so abundantly shed upon its pages by modern knowledge. It must be dull and lifeless if it is looked upon as guaranteeing the validity of theories about God and man which are in fact entirely discredited by a deeper apprehension of God's relationship to man.

This is the conviction that will be found to run through all the Essays of this book. It is the function of truth to liberate men's minds from the bondage of idolatries.

Our great need to-day as always is a childlike faith. "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." It is a favourite text with our traditionalists, and its traditional interpretation implies that men are to accept without question whatever authority teaches. But those who know little children will interpret it according to their knowledge. They will strive after a faith which, because it is inspired by love, is eager and incessant and altogether fearless in its questionings, which delights in making experiments and is ready to take risks, and which has within it the capacity for endless assimilation and an endless power of growth. Such is the faith which opens, for those who are possessed by it, the gateway into the Kingdom of Heaven.

We who have tried the methods we are here advocating and have proved for ourselves that "the truth" does indeed "set free"; who, after much heart-searching and indeed in some cases with hesitating fears, have abandoned the traditionalism which has ceased to have a vital meaning for us, have proved

once more that the pathway to life is the same to-day as that trodden by the disciples of old. In so far as we have had courage to forsake old ways for Christ's sake, we have found that to die is to live, and to live with a larger and freer life than we had known of old. Out of our own experience we cry to all those who have ears to hear that every honest effort, however feeble and however painful, to seek afresh the living God, the Creator, the Redeemer, and very Life of men, brings an ever more and more abundant reward.





II

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIAN  
INSTITUTIONS AND BELIEFS

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## SYNOPSIS

- I. Development Twofold: (1) Logical; and (2) Real.
- II. Newman's Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine.
- III. The World is a World in Movement.
- IV. Development Ethical as well as Dogmatic and Institutional.
- V. Lessons of Eschatology.
- VI. Political Function of the Papacy.
- VII. Early Transformation of Christianity.
- VIII. The Reformation Inevitable.
- IX. The Illumination: "Reason the Divine Governor of the Universe."
- X. The Critical Movement.
- XI. Archbishop Temple: "A Theology based on Psychology." What is essential in Christ is His Divine Mediatorship.
- XII. The Sense of Community in Religion.
- XIII. Example of the United Free Church of Scotland.
- XIV. Signs of Coming Change.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIAN INSTITUTIONS AND BELIEFS

I. THE development of religious institutions and beliefs may be logical or real.

1. Logical development is the explication of the content of a notion. Nothing new is added ; it is like the opening of a closed hand. Such a development is consistent with the static, or mediæval, conception of the world, and is not unknown to the older theologians. In this sense of the word many of them would admit a development—e.g. of the Papacy, of Transubstantiation, of Sacramental Confession, of the devotion to the Blessed Virgin—from the less formally complete teaching and practice of an earlier age. But there is no process, they would maintain, in the notion ; the change is not in the notion but in us. This proviso is essential. The full powers of the modern Papacy, we are taught, were conferred by Christ on Peter ; and the Syllabus of 1907, in condemning the proposition that the apostle was ignorant that this was so, appears to reject the principle even of logical development—of which it would be truer to say that it is tolerated than that it is approved of, by the official Church. Pius X carried

this identity of dogma back into the legendary age of the Old Testament, attributing a knowledge of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin—defined in 1854—to the Hebrew patriarchs. Noah, he says, contemplates this mystery in the ark ; Moses meditated upon it before the bush that burned in Horeb ; David when he danced before the Ark of the Covenant. This is the language of a formal Encyclical (February, 1904), not the devout play of a pious imagination sporting over the sacred text.

2. Real development supposes a change not only in us but in the notion. The notion does not stand, a world of objective truth, motionless while the stream of life passes. No ; bank and stream are alike in motion ; all things flow. And the unity of the process is a unity of origin and direction, not of content ; the waters are many, but they have one source and one goal.

What the Church takes to be logical are in fact, with few exceptions, real developments : the Mass or Eucharist, from the breaking of bread ; Baptism, from the primitive immersion, which at once symbolised and coincided with spiritual regeneration ; the decorous offices of our modern churches from the tumultuous assemblies described in the first Epistle to the Corinthians—"will they not say that you are mad ?" Some of these developments are legitimate, some illegitimate ; some temporary, some permanent ; some technical, some part and parcel of a larger life-movement, such as—to take ethical examples—the abolition of slavery, the growth of humanitarianism, or feminism. Their germs are to be found in the New Testament ;

but they are found in a rudimentary shape, their emergence from which was dependent on a general replacement of lower by higher ideas.

It is obvious that the Eleatic unity postulated by Catholicism—I use the word in the European sense—has no room for such developments. Hence the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church to progress. It cannot, human nature being what it is, exclude it. But it admits it reluctantly, under protest, in as small doses as possible—and in hope of better days, when the concessions, extorted under pressure of necessity, may be withdrawn. The opposing forces are, or used to be, spoken of as the Pope and the Revolution; in 1860 Newman preached a famous sermon under this name. The Heraclitean flux calls, not indeed for the Pope, but for a certain ideal balance. “We may compare Parmenides and Heraclitus to two lofty and precipitous peaks on either side of an Alpine pass. Each commands a wide prospect, interrupted only on the side of its opposite neighbour. And the fertilising stream of European thought originates with neither of them singly, but has its source midway between.”<sup>1</sup>

II. Some years before his death Father Tyrrell, on re-reading Newman’s *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, wrote to a friend, “I came to the conclusion that it is a bad book.” By bad he meant sophistical and misleading; which no doubt it is. But it is also uniquely suggestive. We may apply to the writer Harnack’s criticism of Rudolf Sohm—that he has arrived *ex errore per veritatem ad errorem*. But, to be just, we must finish the sentence: “There are few

<sup>1</sup> “The Greek Philosophers,” A. W. Benn, p. 25.

books from which so much knowledge of early Church history may be gained." For this is true, as of Sohm's *Kirchenrecht*, so of Newman's ingenious and paradoxical work.<sup>1</sup>

I am not sure that Tyrrell would now have insisted so strongly on the misleading tendencies of the *Essay on Development*. It is misleading ; but it has to a great extent ceased to mislead. A certain number of people still become Catholics, hyphenated or un-hyphenated. They do so for many reasons—political, temperamental, æsthetic ; one only excepted—belief in Catholic doctrine ; so that the Cardinal's theological argument does not touch them directly, while its drift, its affinities, and its large suggestiveness, are calculated to lead them by other paths to another goal.

At the time of its publication (1845) the book was a storm-centre. At Rome indeed it was known by hearsay only ; since, as Newman's biographer informs us, "no theologian in the city read English with any fluency."<sup>2</sup> But the American bishops denounced it as "half Catholicism, half infidelity." Mr. Gladstone wrote to Manning, then an Anglican, that "it placed Christianity on the edge of a precipice, from which a bold and strong hand would throw it over" ;<sup>3</sup> while Bishop Thirlwall, with characteristic acumen, pointed out the underlying *petitio principii*—the assumption of the infallibility of the Roman Church ; and insisted both on the fallacy of the reasoning—the features of Romanism on which it laid stress being developments

<sup>1</sup> "Dogmengeschichte," A. Harnack, i, 39.

<sup>2</sup> "Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman," W. Ward, i, 159.

<sup>3</sup> "Life of Cardinal Manning," E. S. Purcell, i, 315.

indeed, but illegitimate developments or corruptions—and on the dangers to which this reasoning opened the way. There is no abuse or social evil which might not, he says, be defended on the ground that it had arisen gradually out of earlier conditions to which little or no exception could be taken ; and of the Essay as a whole, “ The singular combination of the extremes of scepticism and credulity which it exhibits to a degree almost without precedent will not recommend it to those who value either freedom of thought or earnestness of faith.”<sup>1</sup>

Newman did not invent the theory of Development. But he formulated it with the skill of a great dialectician and the art of a great man of letters ; he gave it currency, and the prestige of his name. The Essay disposed once for all of the *Semper Eadem* conception of Christianity then common to Catholics and Protestants. “ You are not primitive,” was the charge brought against Rome by Anglican and Puritan alike. Newman was too well informed and too astute to deny it. He met it by an effective *tu quoque* : “ Neither are you.” But, however effective as an answer to the appeal from Trent to Nicæa and Ephesus, the argument fell flat when the appeal was carried back from all three—from Pope and Church and Council—to Christ, while it led by a fatal sequence of ideas to that larger conception of Development as a law of life, for which religion at any given point is a stage in a process and provisional : “ Behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.” It is impossible to suppose that so acute a

<sup>1</sup> Charge of the Bishop of St. Davids, 1848.



mind as Newman's was blind to these applications of his theory ; or to the results to which, when thus applied, it led. But it was no business of his to indicate them. He used it for a particular purpose ; and with a certain recklessness—for indeed it was like striking a match in a powder magazine—he did not look beyond this end.

III. The Reformation strengthened the controversial element in religion at the expense of the scientific. The Protestant was in need of a breakwater against the flood of superstition which had overrun the Church ; and in the Bible, the inspired record of an earlier stage of revelation, with which mediæval religion was irreconcilable, he found one. The Catholic was in search of a short and easy method of silencing the innovators who threatened the destruction of Christianity as he understood it ; the Vincentian maxim, *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*, lay ready to his hand. History was fatal to each disputant ; a world in movement refused to be measured by fixed standards. It was not true that “ the Bible, and the Bible only, was the religion of Protestants ” ; it was not true that the Catholicism of Trent was identical with that of Nicæa, or that either was identical with the Christianity of the first age. Newman started with an admission of this divergence ; he replaced the authorised and accustomed, “ You change ; therefore you are in error,” by the revised, “ Here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.”<sup>1</sup> This, though he was not a Modernist, made him the father of Modernism, and explains the condemnation of his distinctive

<sup>1</sup> “ Development,” p. 10.

positions, though their source is not named, in the Syllabus of Pius X.

It is not surprising that not a few Protestants should be disposed, on the face of it, to go with the Pope—who has more disciples than we might suppose outside his own communion. For the Papacy represents, amongst other things, that fixed determination not to think, which is characteristic of the intellectually unregenerate in—and outside—all the Churches, and which cuts them off so effectually from the things of mind and the movement of spirit. It is not that they do not know, or even that they do not want to know. Either might be pardoned. But they go further; they want, and are resolved, not to know. The difficulty presented by the Development theory is one to which the answer is, *Solvitur ambulando*. For Christianity *has* developed. It is only by a large admission of this development that the institutions and beliefs of any modern Church can be defended; the starting-point of the apologist is that “from the beginning it was not so.” The process is unceasing; it grows while men sleep. But there are times when it is catastrophic. In the second century, in the sixteenth, and again in the eighteenth, Christianity was reconstructed almost out of recognition. *Nec tamen consumebatur*; the bush burned with fire, but was not consumed.

IV. The first of these reconstructions presents itself to us to-day under the form of eschatology, and in an ethical as much as, perhaps even more than, in a theological shape. It was a saying of Father Tyrrell’s that Christian ethics needed criticism as urgently as Christian dogma; and the situation has developed quickly. We

are faced by the ethical problem which he foresaw. The criticism of institutions and beliefs has been settled, and settled in one sense. I do not mean that this sense has been universally accepted. It has not. But, with those who count, the question has passed out of the province of discussion. Its general acceptance is a matter of time—shorter or longer; perhaps longer; but the decision will not be revised. The criticism of ethics is still in the making. It has to be thought out and to justify itself, to find its proper methods and form.

V. One thing, however, the eschatologists have taught us: that it is hopeless to attempt to understand primitive Christianity till we have ceased to look at it from the standpoint of the Christianity of our own day. If we think we find the tenets or practices of any modern Church, our own included, among the first Christians, we deceive ourselves: they belong to earlier strata, which, with their fauna and flora, have long since disappeared. Primitive Christianity had three main features: (1) Enthusiasm, (2) the belief in the Parousia, (3) the opposition between Palestinian and Pauline religion—"my gospel," as St. Paul calls it, and that of "them that were of repute."

(1) Enthusiasm has, for good or for evil, become foreign to us. The Church of Rome exploits it; the Church of England patronises it; the Free Churches coquet with it—at a safe distance. But any such attitude is an absolute disqualification for the understanding of early Christianity, for the early Christians were enthusiasts to a man. They spoke with tongues; they worked and experienced wonders; they prophesied; they saw visions and dreamed dreams. "No

one," says Jowett, perhaps not without a touch of irony, "No one can read the ninth chapter of the First or the eleventh and twelfth chapters of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, without feeling how different the Apostle St. Paul must have been from good men among ourselves." <sup>1</sup>

(2) The belief in the literal and immediate Coming of Christ is the key to the Church of the First Age. It accounts for its distinctive features, and explains the absence of much that, looking back from later stand-points, we expect to find in it but do not find. Conceive a community animated by it ; what a revolution in feeling, thought, and conduct, would follow ! For us life as a whole rests on the assumption that our environment is, relatively at least, permanent ; that to-day will be succeeded by to-morrow, to-morrow by the day after, and so on indefinitely. The removal of this assumption could not but withdraw men from the ordinary duties of life. The ethical outlook would be revolutionised—not always in the interest of ethics. Renan's *Abbesse de Jouarre* shows that the shadow of the impending end does not necessarily act either as a sedative to passion or as a deterrent from its indulgence ; it makes one man a fanatic, another a debauchee. But in either case those who live in it live for the moment. The Christians of the first days did so. They withdrew from public life—*infructuosi in negotio*, was the reproach directed against them ; they made no provision for the future. The late organisation of the Church, the fluidity of her standards, teaching, and observance for more than a century, the gap between

<sup>1</sup> "St. Paul's Epistles," i, 174.

the literature of the Apostolic and that of the post-Apostolic age—these things which are so unaccountable and so perplexing to us are the natural consequence of the attitude of intense expectation in which they lived. The questions discussed among us to-day—the nature of the Church, the origin of the sacraments and the ministry, the manner in which Christ entered into and left this world—would have had no meaning for them. Those of them even who had known Christ after the flesh knew Him so no longer. What great importance was to be attached even to the most sacred events of this world, if it was so soon to be lost in another? Why make provision for the Church of the future—her government, her worship, her theology—when the Church of the present was—to-day it might be—to greet her returning Lord?

(3) With regard to Palestinian and Pauline Christianity, we are coming to see that the reaction against Tübingen has been carried very much too far. “Baur’s outline of the process through which the nascent faith attained to full self-consciousness as a world-religion required correction rather than disproof,” says Professor Bacon; while “for the clearer definition both of the task and the methods of criticism reached by the concentration of attention upon the contrast between the Petrine and the Pauline conception of ‘the Gospel,’ we owe a lasting debt to the Tübingen school.”<sup>1</sup> It is a safe maxim never to take a reaction without a large, a very large, discount; reactions invariably overshoot the mark. Had Palestinianism prevailed, Christianity would have degenerated into a sect under

<sup>1</sup> “The Making of the New Testament,” pp. 41–43.



“ a caliphate in the family of Jesus,” overweighted with Jewish particularism and crushed under the burden of the Law.

VI. Such was primitive Christianity. It was short-lived ; before the middle of the second century it had disappeared. In our own time it has disappeared so completely that we cannot even imagine it. A charismatic religion, for which a tribal theology is an open question, and the end of all things imminent—for the picture of the Day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians iv 14—17 is literal, not symbolic—we do not think, we have ceased even to dream, in this way. Nor is this the paradox that Newman in a famous passage—“ Strange antitype indeed to the early fortunes of Israel ! ”—conceives it.<sup>1</sup> For the most important events come about silently, unbidden, and unforbidden, in virtue of the natural process of change incident to human life and intercourse. When the brotherhood became a World-Church, an action and reaction set in which transformed it ; the change without followed upon and reflected the change within. The wonder would have been had it *not* been so. Reconstruction was a condition of continuance ; primitive Christianity perished, says Harnack, that Christianity might survive.

But the reconstruction was radical. Christianity ceased to be what it had been ; and became what it had not been. Few even to-day realise the extent to which this was so. Formerly fewer still were in a position to do so. The Reformers of the sixteenth century appealed against the mediæval Church to the Fathers. The

<sup>1</sup> “ Historical Sketches,” i, 418.

tribunal was vague and uncertain. On points of detail the appeal was often—though by no means invariably—successful ; full-fledged mediævalism was a development, and one of slow growth. But these early authors spoke in various and inconsistent accents. The unanimous *consensus patrum*, whether invoked by Bellarmine or Bull, was non-existent ; the writings appealed to were “ a great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts.” They served, no doubt, often enough to embarrass a Catholic controversialist ; he was caught in the net that he laid. But it is foolish to try to establish a Scriptural, reasonable, and reformed Christianity upon them ; to accept the first eight, or six, or four Councils is to find oneself deep in the mire. For by the end of the second century the premises of mediævalism had established themselves in Christendom, and it is a mistake to think that the earlier stages of the system were the least mischievous. A writer whose knowledge of the patristic period is exceptional argues that “ if particular points be had in view, it may be affirmed that Popery is a practicable form and a corrected expression of the Christianity of the Nicene age.” <sup>1</sup>

VII. For one function of the Papacy in history—it is not, of course, its only function—has been that of restraining. In this, as in so many other respects, it has shown itself “ the ghost of the deceased Roman Empire ” ; “ He who now letteth will let until he be taken out of the way.” Rome has never been, and is not now, a school either of piety or of learning. It

<sup>1</sup> “ Ancient Christianity,” 1840, i, 63.



has been indifferent to both. Seldom has it looked away from what has been at once its aim and its achievement—the building up of the universal Papal monarchy. It has used theology and religion as means, and secondary means, to this end. When the Popes have persecuted, it has been in the interests not of orthodoxy but of their own absolutism ; when they have encouraged fanaticism, it has not been with the desire, however misdirected, of promoting religion, but because they could not afford to alienate the support of the vulgar, who insisted upon being, and were, deceived. They have never wanted saints to put in the foreground—a Francis of Assisi, a Xavier, a Curé d'Ars. But the men behind the scenes, who pulled the wires on which these parade-figures danced, were not saints but astute and unscrupulous politicians, bent on securing secular ends by any and every means. Popular superstition runs ahead of authority and of dogma. The attitude of Rome, even under Pius IX, to the famous shrine of Lourdes was characteristic. It was that rather of Pilate than of Caiaphas ; it opposed the novel and equivocal devotion, though it did not oppose it very resolutely or for very long. And the growth of miracle among the Catholic populations of the South is so prolific that ecclesiastical authority finds itself compelled to prune it rigorously ; for one case in which it escapes suppression in nine it is successfully suppressed. It was in this sense that the earlier Popes acted. Their action followed up, embodied, and legalised certain opinions and practices which were already prevalent in an undefined form. But it rarely pushed on in advance of popular feeling and

usage ; on the contrary it followed in the wake of ancient superstitions, and expressed the inherited prejudices of the community in enactments which were often of a corrective and qualifying kind.

VIII. The Nicene age saw the rise of the hierarchy, of sacramentalism, of asceticism, of saint-worship, of miracle-mongering. Such were the results of the diffusion of Christianity, of the various cultural levels of its adherents, of contact with secular civilisation ; the gold became dim. For the cosmopolitan culture of the time was in a state of decadence, not to say decomposition. A turbid flood of Oriental mysticism had overrun the exhausted soil of Græco-Roman philosophy ; thaumaturgy did duty for science, theosophy for speculation, asceticism for ethics. At its best the patristic period was a Silver Age ; at its worst it was one of very base metal. The interminable Trinitarian and Christological controversies of the fourth century, when we have read into them all that we can—and much that we cannot—leave an impression of aridity ; and the later Scholasticism “ lies between us at our present station in the world and the immediate diffusion of the truth from heaven as ‘ the morning spread upon the mountains ’—an atmosphere of mist through which the early beams of Divine Light have been diffused.”<sup>1</sup> Not without many a strange refraction. The light was not broken only, but distorted ; outlines were blurred, proportion was destroyed, perspective lost.

No later construction of Christianity can compare either in extent or in significance with that which took place when the New Testament community developed

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Hampden, Bampton Lectures, 1832, p. 8.

into the Church of the Fathers ; nor can any that is conceivable in the future take so radical a shape. The word “ pathological ” should be avoided ; the change was brought about by the circumstances and requirements of the time. This was at once its sufficient reason, and—for though it was not the best, it was probably the best possible, given the situation—its justification. And if so fundamental and momentous a change could take place in the morning of Christianity, when it stood fresh from its Founder’s hand, is it possible to limit the reconstructions of later days on the ground that they are reconstructions ? The question is not, Are they reconstructions ? but, Are they reconstructions imposed upon us by the necessities and in the interests of the community ? by veracity ? by charity ? by prudence ? For “ against such there is no law.” The authority for this position goes back to the first and greatest of Christian mystics—the author of the Fourth Gospel, the 14th, 15th and 16th chapters of which are conclusive. No religious founder ever left so much to be done by his followers as Christ. Psychology confirms it ; “ ideas do not enter the world of reality unharmed.” History demonstrates it ; Christianity has changed, is changing, and will continue to change. It is, says Rothe, *das Allerveränderlichste ; das ist sein besonderer Ruhm.*

IX. The Reformation swept away much that for its generation was of the very heart of Christendom—the extension of the Incarnation in the Mass ; the forgiveness of sins in sacramental confession ; the eternal feminine presented by the cultus of the Blessed Virgin. “ O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance ! ”

was the cry of piety. To this day simple Catholics find it difficult to regard Protestantism as Christianity at all. Yet the change from mediæval to Reformation Christianity was as inevitable as, and less difficult to justify than, that from primitive to Nicene. The new wine burst the old bottles. The clergy were no longer either better or wiser than the laity. The invention of printing had brought the Bible to the people, and the contrast between biblical and ecclesiastical religion was palpable; the Renaissance had brought to light the forgotten values of the classical world. Times of stress and strain, take what shape they will, are unfavourable to piety, which is a tender plant and loves the shade. But they are not to be envied who can read the Acts of the Reformation martyrs—Bradford, Taylor, Cranmer—unmoved; or who do not instinctively class a George Herbert, a John Bunyan, and a Samuel Rutherford with the worthies of Catholic Christendom. The saints, wherever found, have one language, which men of good will, being “taught of God,” recognise; “We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.” I remember hearing the late excellent Father Maturin speak with characteristic candour and generosity of the intellectual and religious possibilities of a position with which his personal convictions forbade him to associate himself, that of Liberal and Evangelical Protestantism. When a man’s eye is single, his sight is clear.

X. The Illumination carried things a stage further. The movement is so closely associated with that of the French Encyclopædists—their intolerance of convention; their hatred of tyranny, civil and religious; their

philosophic ardour ; their corrosive wit—that the extent to which it influenced the Churches is forgotten. But it was great. The age was one of Reason. Nature, Man, God—all were reasonable ; in religion, as in speculation, the appeal was to the light within. For this light was of divine kindling ; “ The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord.” Reason therefore “ is the Divine Governor of the universe,” said Whichcote ; “ to go against reason is to go against God.”

In 1785 Paley dedicated his *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* to the then Bishop of Carlisle :

“ Your Lordship’s researches [he says] have never lost sight of one purpose ; namely, to recover the simplicity of the Gospel from beneath that load of unauthorised additions, which the ignorance of some ages and the learning of others, the superstition of weak and the craft of designing men, have (unhappily for its interest) heaped upon it. And this purpose, I am convinced, was dictated by the purest motive ; by a firm and, I think, a just opinion, that whatever renders religion more rational, renders it more credible ; that he who, by a diligent and faithful examination of the original records, dismisses from the system one article which contradicts the apprehension, the experience, or the reasoning of mankind, does more towards recommending the belief, and with the belief the influence of Christianity, to the understandings and consciences of serious enquirers, and through them to universal reception and authority, than can be effected by a thousand contenders for creeds and ordinances of human establishment.

“ When the doctrine of Transubstantiation [he continues] had taken possession of the Christian world, it was not without the industry of learned



men that it came at length to be discovered that no such doctrine was contained in the New Testament. But had those excellent persons done nothing more by their discovery than abolished an innocent superstition or changed some directions in the ceremonial of public worship, they had merited little of that veneration with which the gratitude of the Protestant Churches remembers their services. What they did for mankind was this : they exonerated Christianity of a weight which sunk it. If indolence or timidity had checked these exertions, or suppressed the fruit and publication of these enquiries, is it too much to affirm that infidelity would at this day have been universal ? At a time when some men appear not to perceive any good, and others to suspect an evil tendency, in that spirit of examination and research which is gone forth in Christian countries, this testimony is become due."

Thus Paley. To-day another spirit animates English Churchmen. I can think of only one living bishop who could be addressed, without irony, in such words. It is to be regretted, it is greatly to be regretted, that this is so. Vision and tradition vary in inverse proportion. And, "where there is no vision, the people perish" ; the blind lead the blind. No gifts, however excellent, of another order can avert the inevitable results of such leadership.

" La plus sage des politiques, la plus généreuse sollicitude pour les classes populaires n'assureraient pas chez nous l'avenir du catholicisme, si le catholicisme qui, étant une religion, est d'abord une foi, se présentait sous les apparences d'une doctrine et d'une discipline opposées au libre essor de l'esprit humain, déjà minées par la science, isolées et

isolantes au milieu du monde qui veut vivre, s'instruire et progresser en tout." <sup>1</sup>

XI. In our own time the question of Development has again become one of the first importance. For "we see not our tokens." The old stars are set ; the new are not yet risen. We are

"Wandering between two worlds—one dead,  
The other powerless to be born."

Neither the Bible nor the Church presents itself to us in the traditional perspective. And the historical sanctities of Christendom are faded ; the outlines of its sacred figures are confused. More important still, the point of view has shifted. Not more surely did Copernicus give a new orientation to science, or Kant to speculation, than criticism does to religious knowledge. As long ago as 1857 Archbishop Temple wrote, "Our theology has been cast in a scholastic mould, i.e. based on logic. We are in need of and we are gradually being forced into a theology based on psychology. The transition, I fear, will not be without pain ; but nothing can prevent it. To make the study of divinity real and not in some degree unsettling, seems to me simply impossible."<sup>2</sup> The last two generations present us with a commentary on these prophetic words. People do not now ask, "Is Christ of one substance with the Father ?" or, "Is it part of the notion of Christ that He is so ?" ; but "How did men come to believe that He was of one substance with the Father ?" ; "How did they come to think in this way ?" Though it must

<sup>1</sup> "Autour d'un petit livre," A. Loisy, p. xxxv.

<sup>2</sup> "Memoirs of Archbishop Temple," ii, 517.



be remembered that the logical, or metaphysical, element in thought is not got rid of by being seen in a changed perspective. *Expellas furca ; tamen usque recurret*. For mind is part of the universe, akin to, and ultimately in accord with, the system of things.

The "original or birth-sin" of theology is that, instead of constructing its conceptions out of its facts, it constructs its facts in accordance with its conceptions ; by a *tour de force*, and with unhappy results. For it becomes the victim of a perverse and misapplied logic ; and false to its nature, it becomes a principle of exclusion, not a law of love. It anathematises the Western because he admits, and the Eastern because he rejects, the *Filioque*. It unchurches the Quaker, because he is unbaptised ; the Anglican, because he is separated from the Papacy ; the Presbyterian, because he is not episcopally ordained. It insists on a theory of inspiration of which Scripture knows nothing ; on an ecclesiasticism with which it is inconsistent ; on a Christology abstract, arbitrary, and imported from without into the text. For there are three distinct Christologies in the New Testament : that of the Synoptics, in which a still earlier stage is indicated ; that of St. Paul ; and that of St. John ; while the formulated dogma of the Councils is the product of reflection on testimony and data which could be, and history shows were, interpreted in more than one sense. To think in this way is to be exposed to grave confusion. It is dangerous, e.g., to argue that because Christ was God, He *must* have done this or *could not* have done that. This is to lay a trap for consciences ; we do not know. For "no man hath seen God at any time" ; we have

“neither heard His voice, nor seen His form.” The path of experience is safer. Christ did, taught, suffered as it is written ; *therefore* His being God is not inconsistent with these things. The mysterious events which took place concerning Him before the Gospel history, properly so called, opened and after it closed, have recently become matter of discussion. It was inevitable, the state of knowledge being what it is, that this should be so, and complaints are useless. But the ground is holy. Fra Angelico painted the Son and the Mother on his knees. “Il serait bien,” says Renan, “que la critique fit de même, et ne bravât les rayons de certaines figures, devant lesquelles se sont inclinés les siècles, qu’après les avoir adorées.”<sup>1</sup> But one thing we must neither think nor say ; it is this—that because Christ was God, it follows either that He was born, as other men are not born, out of the course of nature, or that the wonder of the First Easter took place as an event in place and time. It does not follow, and it is suicidal to say so ; these questions must be argued on other grounds. What is essential in Christ is neither speculative subtlety nor historical detail, but the Divine Mediation. “There is one Mediator between God and man, Himself man, Christ Jesus ; who gave Himself a ransom for all.”<sup>2</sup>

XII. The Liberal Churchman is made at times to feel himself “an alien unto his mother’s children” ; “fat bulls of Bashan close him in on every side.” He belongs, he is told, to “the Sterile Party” ; he is “a literary clergyman, with an interest in theology”—

<sup>1</sup> “Les histoires critiques de Jésus,” 133.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Timothy, ii, 5.

surely this is better than being an illiterate clergyman, with no interest in theology ?—he is “not constructive” —people who do not know what construction is are always insisting on this ; or, “what he says is true, but he is not in a position to say it” ; he is “out of place among the clergy, or in the Church.” What a conception of religion such a view implies ! One has heard of the French *catholiques athées*. Religion, says Crabbe, “often fears her friends.” But when he looks round, he may take courage. In his lifetime Calvinism, that black shadow upon English religion, has disappeared. Who now, with St. Augustine, regards the virtues of the antique world as “splendid vices” ? or supposes, with our thirteenth Article, that works done before justification “have the nature of sin” ? A once popular religious writer described the lost as abandoned “to the inventive fury of an omnipotent and infuriated God.” Who would not now put down such sentiments as insane and blasphemous ? So eminent a man as Newman writes of the fierce tribesmen of Israel who extirpated Amalek root and branch, slaughtering in cold blood man and woman, infant and suckling, “Doubtless, as they slew those who suffered for the sins of their fathers, their thoughts turned first to the sin of Adam, and next to that unseen state where all inequalities are righted.”<sup>1</sup> To-day, in the humblest conventicle, such words would rouse deserved indignation and contempt. We resent the pious hubristics of the *Church Times* ; not always perhaps without reason. It is not a very amiable or a very cultivated organ ; in moments of irritation one is tempted to apply to it

<sup>1</sup> “Plain and Parochial Sermons,” iii, 187.

Dryden's criticism of Elkanah Settle: "His style is boisterous and his prose incorrigibly lewd." But the tyranny of the *Record* was, in its day, as oppressive and very much more powerful. And the movement whose dregs the *Church Times* represents is a declining movement. The Dean of St. Paul's tells us that it "must soon begin to break up, owing to certain internal contradictions which the enthusiasm of its adherents has hitherto masked or ignored."<sup>1</sup> It has, however, rendered an important service to English religion, though this service does not consist in the revival of mediæval belief and ceremonial with which it is associated. Rather it will be found in the accentuation of the community-element in the assent of faith. We do not come to Christianity from without or as isolated and individual units; if we did, I do not know what our judgment on it would be. But we approach it as heirs of a Christian civilisation, as citizens of a Christian nation, as members of a world-wide Christian community or Church. This sense of community is to us what the proof from miracles or prophecy was to a former generation. Protestantism tends to lose sight of it—to the injury of religion; Catholicism tends to emphasise it—to its gain.

XIII. A few years ago the Free Church of Scotland gave us a memorable lesson in the power of development inherent in and inseparable from a living Christian community. The real question at issue in the prolonged litigation which began in the Scottish Courts in 1900 and ended in the

<sup>1</sup> *The Churchman*, February, 1912.

House of Lords in 1904 was, What constitutes a Church ? To the contention of the minority, known as the "Wee Frees," that the identity of a Church consisted in the identity of its doctrine—they protested, consistently enough, against the Declaratory Act adopted in 1891 by the General Assembly—the representatives of what is now the United Free Church answered that this was not so ; that a Church had power "to legislate upon, and so to change doctrine" ; that it "might adopt a new Confession of Faith." The one limit was its own notion. To change, it must be the Church ; and it would cease to be so did it repudiate the two conditions necessary to its own conception—"the Headship of Christ, and His word as its only rule."<sup>1</sup> If this were not so, if the unity of the Church consisted in creed-content, not in persistence and permanence of direction, we should still be teaching the imminence of the Second Advent ; the Millennium ; the powerlessness of the Church to remit sin after baptism ; the damnation of the unbaptised ; verbal inspiration ; the duty of persecution ; a penal, arbitrary, and endless hell. Static religion is "seeming wise" and seeming pious ; we must "launch out into the deep."

"But [says a great Scottish Churchman] this assertion of freedom is not of the kind that fosters arrogance ; rather it is akin to reverence and godly fear. We have much to hold fast. We are conscious, by God's grace, of our possession of a great body of doctrine, which through the word and also through the providence of God in the history of the Churches, through the fidelity of martyrs and fathers, through the great return to Scripture

<sup>1</sup> "Free Church of Scotland Appeals," p. 545. Edinburgh, 1904.

of the Reformation, through many particular conflicts and revivals, became clear and dear to our fathers, and has become so also to us. We value the life and the traditions we inherit, though we refuse, and we need to refuse, to place them in the room of our living Head or of His word. We own some benignant purpose of God in the genealogy of Church life in which He has cast our lot, and in the peculiar influences which are derived to us from past history. We are not insensible to this ; we are not tired of it ; but it must not run into idolatry. We desire to draw from our history, for ourselves and those who come after us, all the good it has carried with it. We are not ashamed of our fathers. But they taught us that one is our Head, even Christ, and that this holds not only for the individual Christian, but for the Church, for that peculiar society which He created and has promised to sustain.”<sup>1</sup>

These weighty words of Principal Rainy put the question on its proper level. It is a high one. The loyalty of the Christian is not to the traditions of men, but to the truth of Christ.

XIV. The conditions under which reconstruction, or doctrinal and ceremonial changes short of reconstruction, can properly be brought about vary in different Churches. In Scotland the Barrier Act of 1697, in this country the Royal Supremacy, acts as a check upon hasty and ill-considered change. More decisive, however, than the positive restraints imposed by the wisdom of the legislator, either on the zeal of the reformer or the stubborn *non possumus* of the obstructive, is the mysterious instinct which guides the life of

<sup>1</sup> “ Life of Principal Rainy,” P. Carnegie Simpson, D.D., ii, 438.



mankind in accordance with an ever-widening purpose to a distant but an assured goal. The society of the future, economists tell us, will differ widely from that of the present. The same may be said, and with equal certainty, of its religion. The simultaneous movement of thought in all the Churches, and its substantial identity under a variety of surroundings, are as calculated to excite the attention of the observer as were the signs which announced the shattering of the imposing fabric of European society which took place more than a century ago. And we may apply to the former the words used by Burke of the latter—the wisest perhaps that he ever wrote of the great event in question :

“ If a great change is to be made in human affairs, the minds of men will be fitted to it ; the general opinions and feelings will draw that way. Every fear, every hope will forward it ; and then they who persist in opposing this mighty current in human affairs will appear rather to resist the decrees of Providence itself than the mere designs of men. They will not be resolute and firm, but perverse and obstinate.” <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “ Thoughts on French Affairs.”



III

CREATION AND PROVIDENCE

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## SYNOPSIS

### I

## CREATION

### BELIEF AND THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION.

Christians believe in God as Creator.

Certain theologians have said that He creates out of "nothing."

The word "nothing" exemplifies an influence of practical life upon thought and language which introduces difficulties in regard to speculative inquiry. With this we must now reckon.

In the ordinary uses of the word "omnipotence" special dangers are incurred, because we are prone to interpret it as like the mechanical or energetic powers we are familiar with in our dealings with material things, instead of as essentially spiritual in character.

### THE CREATOR

(a) May be thought of by analogy with man

- (1) as artificer ;
- (2) as efficient cause ;
- (3) as creative artist.

(β) Is revealed in Jesus Christ to the utmost ; and, through Jesus Christ (as canon of interpretation), in some manner or degree by all that is created.

## CREATION

Is best regarded as a work and manifestation of God, with which the human artist's work and manifestation offers an analogue for reflexion.

Its character shows God as the great Self-Giver, communicating Himself to His creatures according to their capacity to receive Him. It shows the world not as mechanically constraining God or man, but as having an inviolate order which is the ground of liberty and the co-operative means and instrument of the creative power of life.

The act of creation involves for God (but only as He is manifesting and manifested) limits which are His opportunities for the work of self-sharing love through and throughout a world in evolution.

The evolution of the world is not a mere unfolding or unpacking of that which already is, but a true epigenesis, an evolution that is creative of true novelty. And the Christian sees man as called to be a fellow-worker with God in this creation.

## II

## PROVIDENCE

## BELIEF.

In face of reasoning and of facts the Christian's belief in a "never-failing providence" seems brave, perhaps sometimes too brave. If he ignores or forgets the self-consistency of God and the true character of His creative work and power it may even be unjustifiable. But through recognising and remembering these, he will have a faith neither

unjustifiable nor too brave, one for which he may give good reasons.

#### PROVIDENCE IN NATURE.

This is shown in the practical usefulness of the world attained through man's progressive and adaptive conquest over it.

Science has important lessons for the Christian, both in its methods and results; but especially in the fact that not only the scientific man's intellect but his spiritual passion for truth finds a response through his work.

The response to spiritual needs is always first in value for man, though not in either the order of discovery or of his search and his desire.

Through inversion of this order in our thought and our esteem we misread the providence of God both in nature and in human life.

#### PROVIDENCE IN THE SOCIAL WORLD OF MEN.

To this the revelation of the Cross is the clue. God, accepting conditions for His creative art and self-giving, accepts every consequence. The secret of Calvary is universal—God ever giving Himself to and for the world and suffering for and with it.

The Kingdom of God realised among men is the one necessary condition for the full and clear manifestation of Divine Providence. God neither can nor will—cannot because He will not, will not because He cannot—compel men to realise it. By trial and error they discover this fact. And God incarnate suffers and strives with them.

## CREATION AND PROVIDENCE

### I

#### CREATION

THE Christian believes that God is Creator of all things visible and invisible, but to interpret his belief is not easy, even for himself.

Preachers who follow the lead of St. Augustine and certain other doctors of theology sometimes tell us that God created the world "out of nothing." Hearers restless under such instruction may in ignorance of its history depreciate it unduly, because they do not see that the notion of God's making everything out of nothing drove out a worse—His building up the world, as an architect might, out of pre-existent matter. That was certainly worse. "Nothing," however unsatisfying it may be to us, is now and was always better than a something which is not of God, and therefore must set up external conditions over against Him.

Apart from this as a theological question, most of us need to learn a preliminary lesson concerning ourselves and our manner of interpreting any belief at all—a lesson which the word "nothing" may be used

to convey.<sup>1</sup> Let me ask myself what it really means for me and how I come to use it as I do. I may then understand better what the theologian says and how he has come to say it.

I ransack my experience and other people's in search of "nothing." And this is what I discover. I am thirsty, and an absent-minded friend hands me a glass. "But there's nothing in it," I exclaim. What I mean is that there is no water and I want to drink. If my friend is annoying enough to remind me that the glass is full of air, I tell him impatiently that I can't drink air: "That's not what I want," I say. *Not what I want*, then, is in this case what I really mean by "nothing." Again, I hear a sound outside my door one evening which I take to be the footstep I am waiting for. I open the door and peer out—"No," I say, "it was nothing." It was, in fact, not nothing but something I was not concerned to attend to. *What I am not attending to* must also stand for my "nothing." Once more—I look at the enormous spaces of the stars and remind myself that this sun of ours is separated from its nearest neighbour-sun by millions of miles; that all the thousands upon thousands of the suns and their attendant worlds are in like manner scattered in the depth and width and height of space; that great runaway suns rush through it at almost incredible speed, yet for the most part encounter, in inconceivable stretches of time, *nothing*,

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to M. Henri Bergson for the main points in the following discussion of "nothing." His admirable treatment of "L'Existence et le Néant" will be found on pp. 296-322 of "L'Évolution créatrice" (Alcan, Paris), Eng. Trans. "Creative Evolution," pp. 290-314 (Macmillan & Co.).

*nothing*. If anywhere in this real universe there is a real nothing surely it is in those stellar spaces. If there is "nothing" to delay or stop the passage of the suns, not even such friction as the thinnest of thin air would bring to bear on them, surely there must be "nothing" at all. But no; if there were not something there, the physicist assures us, we should see no stars, nor could they write their signatures on our photographic plates or register their movement by our spectroscopes. There is something useful in the vast solitudes of space: I find no "nothing," even there. And I know of nowhere else to look for it with any better chance of finding.

Experience evidently does not provide a "nothing." But still we speak of nothing when we do not find the thing we want. And when the thing that is there can neither be seen nor touched, heard, tasted nor smelt, and is of no manifest use or hindrance, whatever it may be it is naught for us. But we may talk and think as we please—experience, when questioned, answers only with its unending story of things and their movement and their change. The world of real things presents no void.

Can we, then, reach "nothing" by an effort of imagination? Is it possible to make a picture in our minds of that which neither moves nor changes, but only is not? I may try my utmost but I cannot; simply because I cannot at one stroke do away with both myself and the totality of things. If I imagine this latter blotted out, I remain; if I imagine myself blotted out, something remains in comparison with which blotting out is my fate.



I fare no better when I try a process of reasoning and, denying the existence of one thing after another, endeavour to deny all, and thus attain "nothing" as a bare idea. At least the places of the things remain, and, even as bare ideas, these are not nothing. All my denials really amount only to assertions that something else is, or ought to be, substituted for what I deny. I cannot escape the fulness of experience. But I persist in talking and thinking as though I could. There is my lesson, a lesson of caution and criticism in regard to both my thought and my speech.

With a new caution and criticism I must begin to give weight to the influence of the habits of practical life on thought, and on its instruments of language and logic. I must learn to consider the effect upon these of an unrelaxing pressure of practical needs, elementary or complex. When I need water the air in that glass is nothing to me ; but if I were drowning it would be what I might well call everything—the difference between life and death. I am listening for the footsteps of my friend : the tap of branches on the window-frame, the little live creatures dusk summons from their holes, are nothing ; but if I were a poet listening to the voice of Nature they would perhaps be all the world to me just then. Living my life as interest and attention draw me, I find my nothing or something or everything determined for me according to my needs and interests.

Much care and very critical examination are necessary, it seems, before I trust my thoughts and reasoning on any subject, great or small, where habits influenced by those needs may bias me. All my language needs

watching if I am to embark on speculative inquiries. If I am to think rightly about myself and God I must criticise my very words. I must allow for their history and derivation in myself. It is through the troubled glass of my own ways that I try to decipher the ways of God, and I am prone to take first those ways of mine that are most familiar—the glass most blurred by use and wont—through which to read Him.

For many of us even now it is all too easy to think of God creating worlds as a man makes chairs and tables ; although with a mightier power that brings worlds and their materials into being at a stroke.<sup>1</sup> And this, to all intents and purposes, is creation out of nothing. God is the Great Architect or Artificer—if you like, the Manufacturer who has the singular power of making both stuff and things, that is, both the worlds and the material of worlds.

Naturally enough, although irrationally, when this world of ours treats us ill, when the floods, volcanoes,

<sup>1</sup> “The changes in the world . . . are not absolute transitions. There is no break in the continuity of the world-process. It is the same world which persists through all the changes ; and were it not so there would be no changes. If this is admitted it is obvious that there can be no absolute origination or decess. To suppose that either is possible is to maintain that something may arise from nothing, or pass into nothing ; a supposition which ultimately leads to the conclusion that the whole of reality, as it has come out of nothingness, so it may vanish away into nothingness and literally ‘leave not a wrack behind.’ Granting, then, as I think we must, that the universe has not sprung out of nothing and cannot pass into nothing, we must regard the changes which go on in the world, not as the absolute origination or destruction of being, but as transformations of an imperishable reality.” John Watson, “The Philosophical Basis of Religion,” pp. 128, 129 (Maclehose & Sons).

tempests of earth overwhelm men and their industries and works, when disease-germs sweep them away, when the losses and tragedies that overtake the innocent strike like iron on our souls, we ask why He did not make a perfect world, not one so full of flaws as this. The perfect carpenter, using materials of his perfect making, would make a perfect chair. The ordinary imperfect carpenter, forced to take his materials as he finds them, is conditioned both by them and by his own imperfection ; so does not. His chairs are as good, maybe, as his materials and himself allow ; we cannot expect them to be better. But God, we say, has always had a free hand. He is unconditioned, He is able to do what He pleases. Even if things or materials were refractory and however refractory they were, He could force them to go right. His power is unlimited ; He is in fact omnipotent. And even if He does not create from nothing, and fill (as we at least think we do) vacant places that invited filling, His omnipotence must be held responsible for the character and quality of what He does create, because omnipotence means power to do anything.

When we say this we are not thinking carefully enough to discover that out of our own mouths we may confute ourselves. We know perfectly well that God cannot make a thing at one time and in the same sense to be and not be. He cannot make two and two equal to five. The Christian God cannot lie ; He cannot be cruel, or foolish ; He cannot flout love. There are a thousand things our God cannot do. Above all, and through all the rest, He cannot be self-contradictory. And the range of this last inability must

embrace all His works and ways. What do we mean when we call Him omnipotent, if for us omnipotence means an all-compelling power? That is evidently not the character of His power. If He is omnipotent, then omnipotence must be, or include and be conditioned by, something very different from a compelling power. Indeed we have only to reflect upon ourselves to learn that in a world of creatures in which we play a highly significant part, and to which by nature and nurture we belong, mere external compulsion cannot be all-powerful. Can it compel love, for example? Or even understanding? There we have our clue. If we want to discover omnipotence in God we must look for it, not as a force compelling created things or persons, such as we picture by analogy with the forces of the material and "energetic" world, but as love or at work with love—the love that God, for the Christian, veritably is. Love is indeed omnipotent; "charity never faileth." Thwarted, rejected, it is undiminished and finds a full expression still. Oppressed and persecuted it persists. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Every power of God must be conditioned by and conjoined with love. None has analogy with our energetic and mechanical picture-schemes of the world. We have learnt amiss when we carry thus a narrow and superficial view of earthly experience into our thoughts about God.

If we want to adore omnipotence (and we can never

adore compulsive power) we must see it as divine love, winning adoration in its own wonderful manner that draws forth and does not command. Here is true spiritual power supreme over all chances, changes, oppositions, all circumstances, even of this poor world where love as yet is rare. Nothing can abate its potency and its promise. But it never compels ; it never compels even the return of love. Almighty as it is, it has no likeness of any sort or kind with unspiritual compulsive force ; it never even tries to override the unloving ; it waits, it leads, going on before—it is always love, active as ever, fully expressed, waiting, striving, that it may be received. Many waters cannot quench it ; with it all divine powers are infinite, eternal, truly omnipotent in the only sense omnipotence can have.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “ In the Old Testament this despotic notion of God’s omnipotence runs as an alien and barbarous current through the literature of love and trust. In Christianity it is melted away in the absoluteness of God’s love. But men have never been able to venture themselves sufficiently in love to realise its omnipotence ; and Christian theology, while it has dwelt on the love of God manifested in redemption, has never been able to free itself from the notion of compulsive power in its thought of God’s creation and direction of the world. . . . If we say that love alone is the author and sustainer of all things that exist, we mean that whatever exists exists not by God’s decree but by His Self-giving. Not of the Christ only but of all things in their degree it is true that they are ‘ neither made nor created but begotten ’ . . . The activity of love is self-giving ; it can afford to give itself away, and no reception which it may meet can be either a limitation or a real defeat. . . . So omnipotence and freedom are complementary to one another. The freedom of the creature is not a limitation of the omnipotence of God but its expression : omnipotence is not a limitation of freedom but its ground.” A. C. Turner, *Essay on “ Faith, Prayer, and the World’s Order ”* in “ *Concerning Prayer*,” pp. 417, 420, 421 (Macmillan & Co.).



Let us examine in this light the idea of creation—an idea from which, as Christians, we acknowledge we are never able to escape.

As philosophers we might (or might not) be satisfied with an order of thought in which God is regarded as equivalent to the world and the world as equivalent to God. But the Christian sense of values must preclude this ; as indeed does many a philosopher's sense of rationality. God, for instructed Christians, transcends all worlds of life and things ; He creates, and transcends that which He creates. But He also indwells all worlds and creatures ; He creates and is immanent in that which He creates. Inherent in the Christian belief there are principles of the profoundest philosophic import ; but that belief is not reached by the philosophic way, nor are its principles. Only when a man has come to possess as of his own life the Christian sense of quality and values, the Christian touchstone of discrimination, and the Christian vision of faith, is he competent to know, and perhaps able in some degree to say, what that belief and those principles really are. They are of life, not of system ; of life, not of science about it. And it is this belief and those principles, not ratiocination concerning them, which have kept Christians, however inarticulate they may be or stammering in their speech, steadily convinced that God is creative of His worlds, transcendent over them and immanent within them. The spirit and life of the Christian are fashioned after the fashion of his Lord's ; his belief and principles are a living part of him and correspond with his spirit and life. So through all the centuries of the Christian era he has



kept safe the sublime idea of creation, which speculative thinker after speculative thinker has defaced or cast aside.

We are sure then, we Christians, that God creates. And we know a good deal now about what He creates. But we have to remember that we do not know and, it seems reasonable to suppose, cannot find out how He creates. As He transcends His worlds, so His creative act transcends the utmost effort of comprehension by us His creatures.

Still, though we cannot know how God creates, we have the world and our own selves spread out, as it were, before us ; and the problems of creation draw us like a magnet. We reason about those problems. We think of this and that analogue derived from our own experience ; and the analogue still influencing most minds more than any other is the one of which we have already spoken in this Essay—that of fabricating, making carpenter-wise ; which involves, as we have seen, either a pre-existing “matter” or a prior “nothing.” Then we picture the Great Artificer fabricating worlds which reveal, we say, “His handiwork” ; or the Great Architect working out His plans. Next to this in influence over us stands probably the analogue derived from a more or less philosophic recognition of ourselves as, in a secondary, dependent manner, “efficient causes.” God, then, is the universal efficient cause, the First Cause. And often we are content to reflect no further. He remains the First Cause for us ; remote, perhaps even so remote as to be almost negligible—only an “Occasional Visitor” to the world He has so coldly caused. But cannot we

go further on this path of analogy ? Does it really satisfy us to think of man at his best, his fullest, noblest, highest, as an "efficient cause" ? Does a picture confined to mere causation represent for us the best, noblest, highest mode of activity any man displays ? Assuredly not. A man may be an efficient cause, yet remain the dullest, the least attractive and stimulating, least creative specimen of sane mankind. Surely we can do better than this in our reasoning about God. Even when we think of causation as "intellective intuition," and see God as "the thinking ground of the objects He knows" in His unique manner of knowing, we do not touch our best sources of analogy. We, or some of us, although we make things, are more than fabricators ; although we are efficient we are more than causes ; we are more than thinkers and knowers. Humanity approaches nearer to the truly creative act than these terms can suggest. There are men among us who carry human life to great heights. They are the men who, as we say, are endowed with creative genius. In the man of genius we find the best of all analogues for the creative work of God. Thinkers have called God "the World-Genius." In so doing they have shown the poverty of those who are content to see Him as the Great Artificer or as no more than the First Cause. They have followed human life to its heights that they may seek there the least unworthy analogue for the divine.

We have taken the same way in its different stages when we have tried to understand the moral relations of God with us. Here too we have sometimes thought of a despotism, a compelling force, and have used

familiar epithets of Lawgiver and Judge and King. We have too often made God seem an arbitrary ruler of our morals. It was easy for us. But men who have better learnt the Christian lesson have learnt also to mean what they say when they speak of "Our Father." They have learnt to mean what they say when they speak of Him as the untiring Lover of every soul of man. Here, in this regard, like the thinker who points us to a creative World-Genius, some Christians have searched the heights of man, and found in human life a worthier analogue for God than those of Judge and King, or Lawgiver. Love, then, and genius—once we have learnt to use these in our reasoning about God, we shall never be content to interpret Him through lower means.

Yet plainly what is analogy in the hands of the reasoner may be vision for the seer. A man who should try to understand the Christian position only through reasoning about it would doubtless do well if he were to use the Christian's Lord as a living analogue. So he would certainly reach the least unworthy concept of God. But for the Christian himself, in his measure both seer and thinker and sometimes using analogy like any other man, Jesus, although He assuredly is the highest analogue, is unutterably more. Language and logic can neither fathom nor encompass Him.

It is through human life in the many grades of its translucency for the divine that men catch glimpses of God's glory. It is through the flawless transparency of Jesus Christ that they discover God Himself—see outlines, definition, an "express image of his person." "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." The

divine light lightens every man coming into the world ; the divine Father is the Father of all ; the heavenly Lover seeks all. But it is Jesus in whom His very features are discerned, so the Christian says, the features that are nature and character in God and tell us what He is for us. The Lord Jesus has been called the greatest religious genius of our race. And this He is. His genius was exercised among men in an art surpassing every other, in the art of life ; which for Him was the art of living to show forth and to communicate the life of God given for the salvation of men, the omnipotent love of God poured out to win their love and to become in them a love they can bestow. That which Jesus Christ created has been and is now the most significant and most precious of all works of human genius. He is Himself the greatest work of art the world possesses, the greatest work of the art of God and of the art of man. In His own person He sets before us a life wherein God is “ manifest in the flesh ” of man, and therefore in the substance of the worlds lifted up by life into the order of man. Through Him we have learnt what it means to be divine. So we know God, see God, according to our human measure, “ in, and through, and as,”<sup>1</sup> a brother man. Some of us may at times make of this sublime and supreme manifestation a merely analogical use, seeking to attain by a process of reasoning a conceptual image of God ; but at other and more deeply significant times we turn on Jesus Christ those eyes of ours by which alone we are able to discern a living truth. He

<sup>1</sup> R. C. Moberly, “ Atonement and Personality,” p. 96 (John Murray).

is no longer analogical for us ; He is the living truth of God and man together, related not as term with term, or image set side by side with image, but as those realities, those living personal truths, who being two are become one.

So it may be with the use that in this Essay we are making of the creative work of genius in other men, as pointing us towards an interpretation of the creative work of God. For the Christian reasoner who is only reasoning, human creative genius affords a means towards thinking out a reasonable hypothesis about creation ;<sup>1</sup> but for the Christian seer it is both more and different. Man's genius is God's ; manifest, however dimly and imperfectly through the imperfect, "in the flesh." The created world is a manifestation, not a manufacture or a construct, of God.

The Christian religion is incarnational through and through. God, for Christians, indwelling His creation through and through, is manifest by all things, according to their capacity for Him. Through the many orders in the ascending scale of creatures capacity for God grows ; limits recede as order passes into order from the lowest of material things to the consummate product of humanity. From the atom (or the electron within the atom, or lower still if there is a lower) to Jesus Christ, God's way opens more and more freely before Him. Everywhere we may discover something

<sup>1</sup> It is worthy of note that the Greek word we translate as "Maker" in the Nicene Creed is the one from which we derive our "poet," and that in old English "Maker" meant the creator of a poem. The Greeks used *ποιητής* to signify both a maker in our modern sense and a poet ; the creator of a poem or of music, even the creator of literature or oratorical speech.

of His gift of Himself ; always, through that which His art furnishes and His life supports and uplifts as a vehicle for His Love, He is revealed. Only when we lose sight of all created things do we lose sight of Him. Where they are, God, sharing with them some manner of His all-inclusive life, in some manner is and dwells. His incarnation opens out from beginnings all but imperceptible to fulness in the Christian's Lord.<sup>1</sup>

Here, in this belief and in this vision and knowledge, we find that which accords with the workings of genius in man. If there is one sure criterion by which we are enabled to distinguish the work of the great artist from that of lesser men who are no better than artificers, it lies in his manifest and abiding presence in the product of his art. We say of a great poem, a great picture or statue, a great symphony, that it lives. In truth it seems to work in us as life capable of penetrating our life, seeking to communicate its creator to us in vital intercourse between us and him. It calls for and may elicit a new, original, response. If we give that response we find new power stirred within us, and discover something of which before

<sup>1</sup> "There is one secret, the greatest of all,—a secret which no previous religion dared, even in enigma, to allege fully,—which is stated with the utmost distinctness by Our Lord and the Church ; though this very distinctness seems to act as a thick veil, hiding the disc of the revelation as that of the Sun is hidden by its rays, and causing the eyes of men to avert themselves habitually from that one centre of all seeing. I mean the doctrine of the Incarnation, regarded not as an historical event which occurred two thousand years ago, but as an event which is renewed in the body of everyone who is in the way to the fulfilment of his original destiny." Coventry Patmore, "The Rod, the Root, and the Flower," p. 122.



we were unaware. We are become more than we were before this man of genius gave us his life to meet with ours. So we do well to say that the great artist lives in his work. He lives in it as the greatest man of science or handicraft never does, because he has given himself to his work as only creative genius can, given himself in a passion of the artist's self-bestowing love. Artistic creation embodies for the artist his vision of the real, and is his sacramental means of communicating both his vision and himself to lesser men. He creates after the human manner, and in creating he becomes, after the human manner, embodied in his work. Something of his power is there in that new body, as well as of his vision; something too of his character, his knowledge and his will, much of his passionate creative love. So far as man's power of imparting in this manner goes, he has imparted both to us and to his work his very self. But he will tell you that he never imparts himself or embodies his vision and his delight and longing as he desires; he never succeeds in giving all he would give, even through the best of his works. He is limited—he, the finite artist, is more than limited, he is bounded, by the very thing that is his opportunity of expression, that which he creates. Were he to paint a gallery of pictures or write a library of poems they would not fulfil his vision at any one time, still less keep pace with the advancing fulfilment of himself in ever more and greater vision.

Moreover (and this is above all to be noted by us) the greatest artist can never give to his work "to have life" in itself, let him love it as he may. It conveys



to us something of the virtue and purpose and personal reality of his life, but it has no ownership in that which it conveys ; *it cannot use its gifts*. The artist may say that there are moments when his creatures rule him, sway him this way or that ; but strict analysis shows that in all their marvellousness they are his marvels, not their own.

Here then, as well as in his finitude, the artist fails us as analogue of the divine Creator. God gives as he cannot give. The products of God's genius are His offspring, "sons" to whom He gives life, power, freedom and His grace of loving, to be their own and to use in their own way. The cosmos, though dependent for existence upon God its ground, is not His puppet. He *shares* His originating powers with the things that He creates. His art, then, is of an order transcending all the art of man. And its product transcends all products of the art of man.

We see the transcendence of its product plainly manifest in any man ; we see it gloriously in the crown and consummation of manhood where God, under the conditions of man, is made known to the utmost among men. Very intimately we see and know it in ourselves. We are not puppets ; we are not machines made to go right ; neither are we mere perfect works produced at a stroke by perfect art. Sometimes we call ourselves free agents ; we do better if we say rather that we are growing, or may grow, in our proper share of God's communicated powers, and in freedom to make use of them. We are apt indeed to think that freedom is altogether and in principle our human prerogative. In this we do ill. Human life is continuous with all

the lives of all the worlds.<sup>1</sup> Our recognised history runs back to the entrance of life into the world. In that beginning of life here we are one with every creature. The stuff of our bodies too is the stuff of theirs ; and that is stuff of the earth itself. Therefore we are one with the stars. Earth has at least its congruity with life, or it could never become a living instrument and medium for us, it could never be alive in us. Perhaps (and this is no mere foolish speculation) matter is in truth descendent life, and in it the former "inveterate habits" of a life that ceased to ascend have sunk, as has been said, to a relative necessity in material things. Let this be as it may, man, the flower of earth's tree of life, has roots in the soil, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is not only brother to the beasts but bears in His body still the message and meaning of the rocks. The created works of God are many, but for the Christian they are also one. He sees God indwelling all according to the measure of their capacity and keeping them in one. He reads their meaning through man, as he reads through man all that he is able to read of God. It is in Christ Jesus, he says, that he makes his discoveries, and learns of both earth and God. There the Divine Word speaks and is spoken, so clearly, so fully, that any man who will may hear and understand. Through that Word the Christian hears the story of his difficult world,

<sup>1</sup> "Both ways you are bound to a whole which reaches infinitely beyond you behind and before ; you can find no solution of yourself except in terms which embrace the world, whether the solution which you seek is a rational understanding or spiritual salvation." A. C. Turner, Essay on "Faith, Prayer, and the World's Order," p. 397, in "Concerning Prayer" (Macmillan & Co.)

and learns to interpret it in terms of love, of sacrifice and self-giving.

The world is hard to read ; there is no denying that. The manifestation of the World-Genius, the transcendent Creator, is straitly limited as He embraces and enters into the conditions imposed by His own creative nature and act ; and the lower and more elementary is the work of His creative act and art that we examine, the straiter we find those conditions of His manifestation. In the creatures of the slime He never shows Himself as He shows Himself in man. How can He ? we say ; and thus we confess the limitation which creating involves for the Creator. In creation His Word goes forth with a meaning and a purpose, to both of which He adheres according to His nature—that nature which, although it has no kinship with “the abstract mechanism of immutable rules,”<sup>1</sup> nevertheless is immutably self-consistent.

You may observe if you study physics that atoms, or what stand for atoms now, are no longer said to “look like manufactured articles.”<sup>2</sup> We are sometimes told that if we could see them they would probably look no more and no less alike than suns. Each would have its character and its peculiar way, like Sirius and Aldebaran. The mere fact that this can be said by careful thinkers is significant ; the probability is the more probable in our eyes because it fits much else that we know of created things. No two petals

<sup>1</sup> R. G. Collingwood, “Religion and Philosophy,” p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> “The idea that atoms are absolutely ingenerable and immutable ‘manufactured articles’ stands on the same sort of foundation as the idea that biological species are ‘manufactured articles’ stood thirty years ago.” T. H. Huxley, “Collected Essays,” vol. i, p. 79.

of a flower are more alike than are Sirius and Aldebaran ; no two grains of sand. We do not see in these things the manufacturer turning out his gross on gross of "articles," according to "immutable rules." We see an artist—working, it is true, as no other artist works, yet still an artist. The fecundity of genius, the grace of self-giving, an unfailing fountain of life and its riches—of these we think. And surely the clue to the heart that beats through creation is that inexhaustible self-giving, that divine fecundity, marking for the Christian the ways of God. The artistic individuality of sun and grain of sand, even of the tempest and the fire and the flood—may we not link this with those divine ways of freedom and of love we know so well ? Shall not we, who sprang from the dust of the earth, look for some foreshadowing of ourselves in earth, and for something of the God we discover in ourselves ?

We who are sure He cannot contradict Himself may well expect that the one way used with us shall show some relation to His way with earth. Are there not germs, or, if you like, residual traces, of freedom in the lowest creatures, faint, perhaps all but obliterated, marks, even in material things, of that relative independence which becomes plainer and ever plainer as life finds its way towards the elaborate interlocking and interaction in us of its specific powers with the powers of material things ? Certainly among the simplest living creatures each has a fashion of its own, a character and peculiarity that differentiates it from every other. And as our eyes once again travel up the scale we find more and more clearly shown that which we know most clearly in ourselves—a life possessed and

used to a purpose that is the creature's own. We may find more than this, we may find signs of another kind of limitation which creative work involves for God. We may see in any kind of animal, if not sin, assuredly error ; that is, departures of one or another from the way leading to the fulfilment of its own promise, or a falling-short. We have only to watch with an open mind the most friendly of our dogs to see how near an animal may go to sin ; not merely to error but to sin. He knows law and breaks it ; he knows duty and forsakes it. He has a master who is his God, and he fails to carry out the will of his God, knowing well that will. If he is not a sinner he is on the very edge of sin. And in the animal world there are other, there are indeed abundant, evidences on the large scale of failure, of error if not of sin. The degeneration of whole species into a parasitic mode of life is a case in point ; and there is much of that. Matter itself is perhaps—as some would have us think—a great example of such degeneration. There are those thinkers (already spoken of here) who hold that we are not unreasonable if we regard it as “effete mind” or life, of which the “inveterate habits” have become its physical laws. At least we may justly say, not only of the human race but of the whole world, that it is no machine made to go right, and that in fact it does go wrong. It is of the might of God ; but this might is given away, though never cast away and abandoned. God abides from everlasting to everlasting in and with that which He creates, and from everlasting to everlasting as He creates He strives also to redeem. This is, or should be, the Christian's firm belief. In all the

world, for the Christian, there is no evidence either of the machine made to go right or of the creature abandoned by God.

It is true that for scientific men the world takes on a machine-like appearance ; but this appearance is in fact imposed upon it by the abstract and ideal methods of certain among the sciences. The world tolerates a mechanical interpretation of some of its ways ; that is all. In fulness and in quality it altogether escapes that interpretation. And for the Christian the world is always, or should be, in fulness and in quality. Moreover, there is nothing in the generalisations from experience called scientific laws that any act or error of man or any other creature flouts. When the man catches the cricket ball (so familiar in argument concerning miracle) he does not break the law of gravitation or interrupt or override it, or do anything in any way to influence it. The cricket ball conforms to that law in the hand of cover-point precisely as it would have done on the ground or in the fork of a tree. The law is only a statement in "conceptual shorthand" of a certain relation between material things ; and whether a sun blazes out to disaster or a planet breaks up, both conform to the law, like the cricket ball, and like man in everything he does when by means of his material body he is dealing with material things. The opportunity of error, if there be any, is no doubt small indeed in the material things themselves, though great sometimes in its effects. In man opportunity is obviously far greater ; it has risen throughout the rise of life to his height in life ; it rises now to a magnitude corresponding to the



sin of those men who know of God yet hide their own knowledge from themselves that they may resist Him. But neither error nor sin in regard to material things effects any breach in the fundamental unity of progressive creation, the scientific man's "uniformity of nature," the philosopher's "continuity of process with the emergence of real differences." "If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there." Order is fundamental and pervasive; and upon order is engrafted liberty to go right or wrong, the only liberty that is liberty indeed. Our freedom rests on the inviolate, because divine, order of the world and on that "emergence of real differences" through which life subdues all things to itself.

God, in creating a world that is to manifest Himself, sets limits to Himself, *as manifesting, and as manifested*, which are not boundaries that arrest, but means of passing on. His almighty power is shown in this wonder of a limitation that is veritably a way for Him to the fulness of self-giving. In our speculation concerning Him we have no need to ask for a finite God, as many are asking now. The God who embraces limitation, whereby He makes for Himself opportunities through which to display the omnipotence of love, remains for our faith, as for Himself in fact, transcendently what He is. Not He, but His showing forth in time, is limited and furthered by creation. The limits of the creature that He indwells and sustains in this showing forth are the express manner of an infinite and omnipotent love. He creates a world that is itself creative and responsive by love. If you want to see almightiness indeed, it is there.



We are deceived by the words evolution and development, especially those of us who have a sense of their derivation and their history. We think of an unfolding of that already prepared, of an unpacking of something enclosed. To our minds the grain of wheat encloses or enfolds the plant—stalk, root, leaf, ear. And as we go on thinking further we find ourselves enclosing or enfolding within the single grain cornfield after cornfield, cornfields with cornfields, to the end of the world. So too we think of the evolution of the world. But when we do we invite very sore trouble not only in regard to the world but in our reasoning about God. Looking at the wheat plant we ought to remind ourselves that it grasps within its living power the daily energy of the sun, the rains of yesterday and to-day, sustenance from the earth and air. These were never in the grain from which it sprang; they have been embraced in its self-creative life given through the grain.

There is a word we should do well to learn and use in place of our evolution and development. Unfortunately it sounds too technically Greek for ordinary use. The word is epigenesis. Perhaps we may find a way out of its difficulty by conveying both its value and its meaning to our "evolution." We may do this by an adjective. If we speak of creative evolution we shall correct the false implications of the noun alone. Then we Christians, still speaking of evolution, but having in mind that it is not unfolding or unpacking, but creative, shall see more clearly that the world in its evolution and living creatures in their development both manifest, among other powers bestowed on them,

the creative power of God. We shall see His manifesting of Himself, cramped as it seems to us within the narrow limits of His smallest things, opening out as His creative power given to those things makes for Him, and yet by Him, a more open way. And so even in the least things He is made known.<sup>1</sup>

We see God's self-giving in royal and almighty fulness. We see too that the limits of His manifestation are themselves in their utmost narrowness signs of that fulness, signs of His almighty power to subdue Himself to the multitudinous measures of creation that He may communicate to the very utmost His life and love. He lays aside His glory that His love may find an endless way.

We Christians can neither conceive nor imagine, still less discover in our experience, a world which shares the creative power of God, yet does not advance from small to great, from strait limits of His revealing—a very dark and clouded window for the transmission of divine light—to the wide and wonderful limits of mankind, sanctified and glorified in Christ Jesus.

It is not God Himself who is limited, though in creation He limits His showing of Himself. He, the transcendent God, embraces limits that His creatures may work out together with Him their own life and their own salvation as His sons.

We are a long way from the carpenter-fashion with things. The world has taken on a different look for

<sup>1</sup> "But what man knows of anything is that thing manifested, not essentially travestied, in that same thing's appearances." Baron Friedrich von Hügel, Essay on "Progress in Religion," p. 101, in "Progress and History," edited by Marvin (Milford).

us. We begin to see it as a field for another work of God besides that of creation—His work of saving and redeeming. “The whole creation groaneth,” with us, for God.

Theologians have told us that by the fall of man there came also the fall of the whole created world. We cannot now accept this. We have scanned the history of man and have watched him rise from the status of the beast. We have seen him in his rise attain, as a child still attains, step by step, a greater possibility of sin. We see his least possibility of sin in his lowest stage of manhood. We cannot accept, now, the scheme of a catastrophic fall from original righteousness, and an inheritance by mankind, not merely of the organised results of all men’s sin, but of the guilt of an original progenitor. We have studied that progenitor, or rather those progenitors, and found them only a little nearer to an ability to sin than is the dog, and without the dog’s opportunities. They know less of a God-given law, those arboreal mammals, than any dog of ours. They are beginning to produce laws, learning by slow degrees, no doubt, to sin as no dog ever can. But meanwhile arboreal mammals they are, though human; and we cannot but refuse them that “original,” “supernatural,” righteousness from which the Adam of tradition fell.

The whole creation groans. This is true. But man is its consummation here on earth; he is not, he never could be, the source of woes that pervaded it long before he came to be. Palæontology bears witness to his innocence in this respect. Whatever he may have done to mar the earth since he appeared upon it—and

he has done much to mar as well as make—he is not responsible for the record made in the ages that preceded him. We cannot lay blame on man for earth's imperfection. Shall we then lay blame on God? The Christian cannot; he knows too much of God to blame Him. He knows of the wonders of His love revealed by love in men, and radiant as heaven's glory through Jesus Christ. And he knows (or may know if he cares to know) too much of the wonder of the divine creative genius, the divine self-giving to the least and lowest, and divine, redeeming, saving care. The Christian has learnt, or assuredly he ought to learn, that he himself must be a fellow-worker with God and care, like Him, for all the world. He has learnt, or should learn, that God needs his help and the work men alone can do.<sup>1</sup> He believes, or again he should believe, that there is an immense, a marvellous prospect for men even upon earth, in making earth a fitting place for the establishment of God's own kingdom,<sup>2</sup> and that in the ages to come all men

<sup>1</sup> " . . . setting out from where we are, from the standpoint of the Many, we have no ground for assuming a Creator who does everything but only a Creator whose creatures create in turn. The real world must be the joint work of God and man (including under this term other finite intelligences both higher and lower in the scale), unless we are to deny the reality of that in us which leads us to the idea of God at all." James Ward, "The Realm of Ends," p. 352 (Cambridge University Press).

<sup>2</sup> "The belief in the supernatural is the belief that the spiritual values which faith envisages as its ideal are also the forces which hold the world together; that no limits can be set to the degree in which what we call nature is eventually capable of being moulded in response to them.

"The supernatural is then not an alien order of existence which on occasion supersedes the natural and will one day succeed it; but

shall know of their high destiny as co-redemptors with God. For this he prays every day in his Lord's prayer, praying that God's name may be hallowed, His will done upon earth, and His kingdom established, as it is in heaven. He prays for this ; and because he has his part in bringing it to pass his prayer is his own aspiration ; it rises out of his own craving after the things of God, and speaks from the life in him that is his and is seeking God. He prays ; and he should know well that a price has been paid and is still being paid by the whole world for his ability to pray, for his freedom to approach God and to reach Him by the touch of love and in a knowledge given and received. The world, of which he himself is part and partly product, is imperfect, he sees, yet from imperfection both he and the world may win the perfection God would give. So at least it seems. The utmost stretch of his mind will fail to show him how a perfection freely won can be at the same time enforced, or love be really love if it is compelled to be given. Man is the offspring and manifestation of God ; so is the world from which man arises and which is embraced within his life. There is no potter shaping clay ; there is a Creator bringing forth that which can receive gifts and so own and use them that it may meet the Giver face to face.

If you ask a Christian who has given due thought to the Christian case why this is so, he may tell you it is that which, being implicit (as faith believes) in the whole world's order, has not yet become explicit in its general history or in its behaviour, and so does not enter into the account of it which science can give." A. C. Turner, *Essay on "Faith, Prayer, and the World's Order,"* p. 399, in "*Concerning Prayer*" (Macmillan & Co.).

that it is like asking him why there is something and not nothing.<sup>1</sup>

Your question will seem to him absurd. For him things are as and what they are, were what they were and will be what they will be. And he has learnt to trust his God because he knows Him through Jesus Christ and, in his own poor measure, through himself and his own life. He really knows that God is love and he sees creation as the work of love.

Obviously such a Christian's sense of value and significance gives him a position of advantage for interpreting creation. It is no use quarrelling with him. Tell him, if you like, he has no business to say that a man has more value and significance for the cosmos than a tiger, and he will smile at you. Tell him he has no business to say that in Jesus Christ there is more value and significance than in any other man, and again he will smile—"I know Him," he will say, "on whom I have believed." If you want to quarrel with him, go away first and find some canon of interpretation better than his.

<sup>1</sup> "To say that God might have created a different world, or might have altered the course of history means either that there are limiting conditions external to God, as there are with us when we exercise choice, or that He might have made two and two equal five.

"That can only mean that He might have been an irrational being and created an irrational world. It is not valuable or interesting to speculate on what God might have done, because it is without meaning. If God is omnipotent, it is clearly inconceivable that He should have done anything other than He does. For it is absurd to suppose that, when He might have willed the best, He deliberately willed the second best instead, or that He might have willed anything but the best. God is Love. To say that He is omnipotent is not to give Him an added attribute, it is equivalent to saying that love is omnipotent." A. C. Turner, *loc. cit.*, pp. 423-4.



## II

## PROVIDENCE

IN a trustfulness which seems to those who do not share it begotten of blindness, credulity, desire, or all three, the Christian prays to his God as one "whose never-failing providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth." This is assuredly a brave address. Indeed, when he is attacked with an array of logic or pelted with the hard facts of the world, the Christian sometimes begins to ask himself whether it is not too brave. Just because his faith is for him the most secure reason, a reason lived, he is the more bewildered by attack, the more at a loss to give back reasoning, of which he has never felt the need, for this alien reasoning, or to assert facts of his inner life against those hurled at him from without. Moreover (and this gives rise perhaps to the worst of his bewilderment) he is hampered by uncriticised traditional notions of providence which he has never put to the test of what he really knows about his own life and God. This paralyses him before his opponents, for whom such notions are the most obviously weak places in his defence. His opponents, however, by the very direction of their attack are pointing out the way to strengthen his case, so that it shall need no active defence on his part but only call aloud for their understanding.

This brave address of his to a God ordering all things, to whom he appeals that "hurtful things "



may be put away from him and those “which be profitable” duly given, may be both just and justifiable. But it may be, in fact it often is, presumptuous ; and then it gives a fair and reasonable opening for attack. If the Christian forgets the self-consistency of God and the limits to compulsive power which He sets to Himself as He creates, the appeal to such a power as being able to do anything and everything is an unjustified audacity. God’s providence, if it is in a real sense omnipotent, must, like His creative, sustaining and redeeming power, have the omnipotence of love, never of a quasi-mechanical force. The Christian must not in word or deed or belief defy those restraining conditions which his God employs as opportunities of love, or read into the methods of God what he has made his custom in dealing with the things and powers of the earth. It may be difficult for him, it may be all but impossible in some urgency of need, to tell himself that Almighty God, because He is self-consistent, cannot make a thing be and not be at the same time and place, send a west wind and an east together over the same sea, or indeed in that sense “send” any wind at all. It may be almost intolerable to him to admit that God cannot—or, what is the same where perfect wisdom abrogates choice, will not—rescue a child from brutal hands, because, for one thing among many, He would be depriving the man whose hands they are of powers which divine reason and divine love are irrevocably pledged to give and to sustain. He may be near to despair as he comes to realise that the God who creates all things and without whom nothing abides cannot—or again will not—force men to refrain from

war, or murderous sin, or cruel fraud upon the innocent. But unless he does he cannot justify even to himself his trust in God, or the ways of God with men.

Again, it may be difficult—yet he must learn—to tell himself in hours of stress and anguish that the power of his own prayer is that of love and of a self-consistent reason, not of force ; that there is no magic, no pressure of need, no inducement of gratitude or praise, that he can bring to bear as against God, to divert Him from His way of love into the way of force.

But thus alone can he establish, not only against his critics but for himself, his belief that God's providence is sufficient, through His infinite self-giving, for every need of man.

Here again, as in thinking about creation, he should bear in mind the determining sway over himself of his most familiar, his primary, and in his first grades of life his most urgent needs, and of the education they have brought him. These needs demand a control of mechanistic fashion over material things in order that they may, according to their own manner, be induced to provide him with shelter, clothing and the rest ; and safety, so far as it can be reached. To maintain his footing on the earth and that of those who are more or less his own folk, his wife, children, friends, compatriots, by such mechanical co-operation between himself and things, is both a conspicuous and a pressing need. In the primæval effort of men their demands in this respect must have been far narrower in range than for most of us they are now ; yet in character and principle ours are still like theirs. Such needs always attract, very often compel, attention ; they may, and

in many of us they do, all but monopolise it ; they and the methods by which alone they can be met fill the landscape of the mind. They are urgent ; they are blinding. They focus attention on themselves, and the vast panorama of the rising, purposive, spiritually significant, spiritually methodic life of man is lost to view. Then the desire for an appropriate safety becomes a craving, in some of us even a disease. We are morbid ; we cannot discover that many of the needs, which for us seem so plainly to stand first, may for God (and for ourselves if we knew ourselves and our destiny) in truth stand last. When, on the other hand, we are able to consider our destiny and to regain, if we have lost it, the balance of health in our judgment, we learn to correct this fundamental error of vision and to shift our gaze. Then we learn new lessons of proportion in our various needs, and acquire a new sense of values in regard to them, something of the Christian sense. But still we may have to carry our study further, and try to find out as far as we can, even in detail, what divine providence really does provide to meet life in all its grades and values, and how its methods differ from those we find not only expedient, but compelling, in the management of things as our tools and instruments.

It will be well in this Essay to begin with the lowest grade, with physical things and our needs in regard to them, and ask ourselves whether we can see in the physical world the care, the purpose, the meaning and direction, that we ascribe to God in speaking of His providence as Christians do. Does He use things, or does He not, as we use the instruments we make of them ?

The story of man in his relation to that world is in large part a story of his growing trust in, and profit from, its order and stability. At one time he naturally thought that almost anything he wanted might happen if he could induce the multitudinous powers that were—powers far stronger than he was himself, but of like nature and like character—by the compulsion either of magic, or of placating and adulation, to favour him. Equally, almost anything he did not want might happen at the caprice and ill-will of such superior powers. Men lived for ages (as not a few of them live now) in “an incalculable miscellany of miracles,” and under a cloud of obvious terrors and threatening uncertainties. Nevertheless there were always some things that could be trusted, and life was possible and profitable because things were manageable, although it was precarious. There were some safe things in this very unsafe world. And these were things a man could understand, so he thought—vaguely and intuitively; they were things he could understand and therefore use to his profit.

The number of things he could count upon as safe and manageable, the things he thought he understood and could use, continually increased. Earth's ways grew less and less perplexing; calculation was brought in and reasoned experiment. The years went by, and human experience began to be systematically classified, and human methods of management systematically arranged. Science, in fact, both pure and applied was born. It came to its majority, still charged with promise unfulfilled, as we have it now; its maturity is to come.

For us the world, so far as we have searched it out, has proved itself intelligible ; it has met our intelligence with that which intelligence demands. We see it as rational and orderly ; and therefore we trust it and make use of it with a reasonable confidence. But it still remains perilous, and life is still unsafe, however many of its perils we overcome, whatever increase in safety we attain, however many and varied are its answers to our needs. It is not without much of its ancient terror ; it has even its uncertainties.

Yet terror and uncertainty do not dismay men as of old. We meet them in the strength of an intelligence stimulated by growing success. We are sure they are no matters of caprice ; we are sure that we are not at the mercy of caprice. The world for us is emphatically a world of consistent order in which no thing or event stands lonely or moves unconnected with the rest. It is a cosmos in which "all things work together." We have faith in it, as well as we may, although we suffer, strive and die within it. It serves us well ; and though it slay us, yet will we trust in it. Its order is the guarantee of its providence for us, whether we see that providence as of the machine or of the living spirit.

For all this, there are Christians who do not trust the cosmos, and who very strongly mistrust the scientific men who have most clearly shown us the inviolate beauty of its order. Above all they distrust the physicist and his physical "laws." They think he shuts out the providence of God and in very fact turns this multicoloured, various, useful and in many ways subservient world into a machine. They are afraid

of him ; very much afraid that if he establishes his scientific case the world, however little it looks like a machine, will somehow be one. But indeed it is well to find out what physical science really is and does and is at, before we let ourselves be afraid of it. It is also well to remember that to regard an orange as an oblate spheroid does not prevent it from being juicy and golden, and in no way hinders us from sucking it.<sup>1</sup> It is possible also to see in science an extension of the process by which our ancestors spelt out here and there, and often, we must own, misread, syllables of the Word of God manifest in the things that are being made—an extension by which we are enabled now to put together (and in our turn, no doubt, at times misread) whole sentences of that Word. There is really no difficulty in avoiding the fear of science ; or rather there is only the initial difficulty of trying hard to be reasonable about it. You may go on seeing a bogey almost anywhere if you never take the trouble or have the courage to examine it.

Now, the physical world plainly admits not only of being used as a machine but of being interpreted by reasonable persons, to the satisfaction of their intelligence, in terms of mechanism or of energetics, just as it admits of being interpreted in terms of æsthetics (or as beauty by the artist) and of mere everyday utility by the man whose heart is set on the usefulness

<sup>1</sup> "Knowledge is not simply the reduction of phenomena to law and their resolution into abstract elements ; since thus the unknowable would be found well within the facts of experience itself, in so far as these present a concrete character which refuses translation into abstract relations."—Aliotta, "The Idealistic Reaction against Science," pp. 6 and 7.



of things. In each case a man has an appropriate method of seeking his heart's desire ; and the world is so full, so rich, that in each case it yields an appropriate response.<sup>1</sup>

The physicist's method is sometimes abstract, sometimes ideal. And he finds an abstract or an ideal interpretation of things. He makes a system that can be fitted to the world, applied to it as a man might apply a plan of a room to the room itself, or a diagram of stars to the star-besprinkled sky above him. And we have to confess (indeed we very gladly confess, once we understand what physical science does and means,) that not only do real things allow systems and diagrams and plans to be fitted to them, but that through these artificial schemes some real truth is attained. We are enabled to deal with things more intelligently than we could before, and to use them more strictly in accordance with our purpose. The practical success of the scientific man and the engineer is due to the correspondence of their schemes with something real in the total reality of things.

<sup>1</sup> "Already Mathematics and Mechanics absolutely depend, for the success of their applications to actual Nature, upon a spontaneous correspondence between the human reason and the Rationality of Nature. The immensity of this success is an unanswerable proof that this rationality is not imposed, but found there, by man. . . . We men are most assuredly realities forming part of a real world-whole of various realities ; those other realities continuously affect our own reality ; we cannot help thinking certain things about these other realities ; and these things, when accepted and pressed home by us in action or in science, turn out, by our success in this their utilisation, to be rightly apprehended by us, as parts of interconnected, objective Nature."—Baron Friedrich von Hügel, *Essay on "Progress in Religion,"* pp. 100–102, in *"Progress and History,"* ed. Marvin (Milford).

Consider the law of gravitation, Newton's law,<sup>1</sup> and observe what it is in relation to the real world. It is not an enactment either of Newton or of nature; it does not govern, it does not make any difference to any real thing. Newton said it was a description. It describes in a special kind of language the quantity of attraction (or what looks like attraction and is we don't know what<sup>2</sup>) that every material thing has for every other material thing. It states quantitatively how the attraction of things varies according to their "mass" and their distance apart. That is all. You observe that apples and earth, sun and moon, have been passed through an ingenious physico-mathematical apparatus of the mind, and have left in it for our learning just a plain record of the quantity of pull they exercise, or rather seem to exercise, each on each, in all conditions of distance and "mass." The real things have escaped. An apple and an earth you and I may know, distance between them we may also know; but what are "masses"?

<sup>1</sup> "Every particle of matter in the universe attracts every other particle with a force whose direction is that of the line joining the two, and whose magnitude is directly as the product of the masses and inversely as the square of their distance from each other."

<sup>2</sup> "You sometimes speak of gravity as essential and inherent to matter. Pray do not ascribe that notion to me; for the cause of gravity is what I do not pretend to know, and therefore would take more time to consider it. It is inconceivable that inanimate brute matter should, without the mediation of something else which is not material, operate on and affect other matter without mutual contact."—Newton, Letter to Bentley.

Every hypothesis of gravitation so far put forward calls for stores of energy or stresses enormously beyond anything as yet known or even guessed at by scientific men. None, as yet, has won general consent

There are no such real things ; they belong to the ingenious system of the physicist. But when you and I shall have arrived at some intelligible meaning for " mass " we shall be able to interpret, far better than before, the complicated ways of all material things, whether apples or moons. There is something in nature with which Newton's measuring descriptive law rightly corresponds. Yet does it make the gravitative relation of things any different from what it found them ? They are for us more intelligible ; but suns, moons, apples and earth remain as though Newton and his law had never been. And they still have depths and heights, in which our whole being may plunge and soar, that Newton never touched.

But, you may say, if the physicist has many laws, and if the chemist, the biologist and so forth have their laws, all on Newton's plan, will not this great body of law finally prove the world to be a mere machine ? This sounds plausible, and indeed it was once the hope of science, or perhaps it was more hopefully the hope of men intoxicated by the success of science, who might or might not themselves be scientific. Now, sobriety has dismissed that hope. The biologist, studying the complexity of life, who once so easily accepted the conceptual simplification of the physicist as unveiling for him the concrete fulness of reality in physical forces and molecules and atoms and the like, has now learnt that it does nothing of the kind. And the physicist, who once took for granted that when the physiologist defined his science as the physics and chemistry of the animal body he had surveyed his sphere from pole to pole, and knew what he was talking about, has now

learnt that even if a geometry of living processes be added to his physics and chemistry (as some foretell), still the sphere of physiology includes and is dominated by the selective, determining, transforming power of life, a power before which physical things and forces are made to bow, as to an agent from some higher realm of nature. The task is hopeless. The world is nowhere a machine, although in its physical part it is so patient of mechanical description. It manifests, throughout, "continuity of process," but always too "the emergence of real differences," unmistakably not mechanical. Criticism of the methods of science, of its logic and of its metaphysical assumptions has done good work for men of science, and so has its own constructive advance.<sup>1</sup> Not a few leaders have already said so. And let us who have watched both the critical and the constructive gains gladly confess that a great deal of this good work is their own doing.<sup>2</sup> They are telling us now, though perhaps not in so many words, that we have no need to be afraid of them. But there is a reason we Christians at least should know, why we ought to go further and offer them the right hand of fellowship. They have deep spiritual significance for us, and of this most of them, maybe, are unaware. They have given us mastery in if not

<sup>1</sup> See especially Professor James Ward's Gifford Lectures, "Naturalism and Agnosticism," 2 vols. (A. & C. Black).

<sup>2</sup> See H. Poincaré, "La Science et l'hypothèse"; "Science et méthode"; "La Valeur de la Science." H. Driesch, "The Science and Philosophy of the Organism," Gifford Lectures. Mach, "History of Mechanics." J. A. Thomson, "Science of Life"; "Heredity"; "Introduction to Science." Karl Pearson, "The Grammar of Science." Darbishire, "An Introduction to a Biology." Russell, "Form and Function."

over the world of God's providence for us ; they have put at our service powers of His giving which without their aid we should not have known ; and for this we owe them gratitude. But science does not exist for utility, and these manners of its service are the concern of outliers from the true realm of its operation, of men who apply to practical use what it provides. It exists for the discovery of truth. And it is spiritually significant for us because it has its source not in the desire for usefulness, but in the spiritual passion of men who seek truth and ensue it as for them admirable, adorable, and the object of their spirit's longing. These men not only show us in the world an order through which we, if not they, may discern an Orderer, and of which we, if not they, may think to our souls' advantage when we address our prayers to Him ; they not only show us how in that order we find our bodily needs provided for and increasingly supplied, and our mastery of things enlarged ; they show with a more profound significance that at least one of the spiritual passions of man may, with his intellect, find response in the world of things. It is this last kind of need we are most likely to forget—this, which most we should remember. May it not be that divine providence is directed to the fulfilment of spiritual needs above and through its fulfilment of lesser, though seemingly more urgent, needs ? If we were as poignantly aware of the craving of the spirit and of its supreme significance as we are of the craving of the flesh and its urgency, we should perhaps less often misread God's providence. When we have learnt that He responds, through His divine ordering



of the world in and by which we live as earthly denizens, to the spiritual passion of the scientific man, perhaps we shall think more of His response in other ways to other of the spirit's passions. God, we may well believe, has in His good providence made earth responsive to the spirit in more than a desire for scientific truth. At least it responds to the passion for beauty, which is perhaps pre-eminent in value for our souls. From heights above the plain of mere usefulness and our lower needs we may come to see glories of divine providence for needs that once were hidden from us. We may discern a purpose, determined both by love and reason, that will sacrifice much to the conserving of our highest values, and the furtherance of our destiny as the sons of spirit. From the lowland of mere bodily existence and merely temporal wants, or from that of our self-interested affection, we shall never see that which is so sublime.

Perhaps this fact points to a way of thinking about providence which may help to change the minds of any among us who, as Tauler says, "are for seeing God with their eyes as they see a cow, and would love God as they love a cow,—which thou lovest for the milk and cheese, and for thine own profit." The divine order does give us the opportunity of milk and cheese, but it gives also the opportunity of losing both and dying for want of them. Is not this perhaps really best for us? Are milk and cheese perhaps not the things we need most? And is it not possible that if milk and cheese—bodily and mental comfort, health, wealth, happiness and the rest—were perfectly secure, even for no longer than the term of an ordinary mortal's



life upon earth, more and more of us would be content with earth and that short life, and more and more of us would die like parasites or pigs, the spirit moribund within us ?

The world as it is calls forth from most of us a certain discontent and something of the "spirit" (as we pertinently say) of adventure. But for its dangers and its difficulties it would not. It calls forth, as we have seen, the scientific man's passion for truth. Without its mysteries and complexities and problems, as well as its order, it would not. It calls forth the desire for a deeper truth than that of science, one with which the secrets of beauty are conjoined. It is this that we know within us, when instead of seeing the lily of the field in its botanical setting we see it arrayed in a splendour outshining the robes of Solomon. This is truth, and this is beauty in truth, which only spiritual passion can enable us to discern, and which we neglect in favour of lower things to the impoverishment of our souls. It is better not to be secure in this world, if in security we come to lose sight of the spiritual glories of ourselves and of the world.

Within the divine order of providence there is ample place for the spirit's exercise and growth, in all modes of its God-given passion—that passion which in every mode grows by what it feeds upon, which burns the stronger the more that it consumes. The delight of exercising it in love of goodness or of truth or of beauty never palls ; satiety never overtakes it. In the adventure of its pursuit it is borne ever beyond the self, and breaks down the boundaries of self to include that which

is attained. It is of the divine spirit become the spirit of man, and its due accompaniment is the joy that signalises a creative enlargement of the man. Men of the spirit will tell you that even this world is inexhaustible for them, and that the more their spirit feeds on the world's provision for it the higher its flame rises beyond the world. Blake in his old age had no more solemn and pregnant message for a child than his "May God make this world, my child, as beautiful to you as it has been to me !"

The providence of God, no doubt, is conditioned by the conditions of His manifestation of Himself in and through His creatures ; but His love and His reason find their way through all conditions to those who seek them. "I know now that I shall live," Charles Lister wrote ; "that does not mean that I may not be killed." "I know now that I shall live," the Christian should say, "but that does not mean that I shall not suffer and be wronged and die." The soldier and the Christian both will take risks and face any terror, secure in a providence which orders all things and always observes its order, yet in that very order proffers fulness of life. "All things work together for good," wrote a man who had faced the worst of terrors ; but he adds "to them that love God." It is towards the creating of men for whom all things work together for the good of spirit and life, in a world of much evil and more suffering, many dangers and great disasters, that the providence of God is directed. Such men are indeed worthy to be called His sons. In them He may be seen incarnate, in them His spirit is become

their own and triumphs over the world and in and for the world.

Again we are drawn to look at Him who having been lifted up above the world draws all men's eyes. We look at Him upon the revealing Cross, and humbly we tell ourselves that this is the way in which divine providence, mightily and mercifully ordering all things both in heaven and earth, works out the divine purpose for mankind.

What has become then of our craving for bodily safety or mental comfort here on earth ? What becomes of our desire to find God in some interruption or delay or overriding of His inviolable order ? There is He, God manifest in the flesh, overwhelmed, it seems, both by the powers of nature and the powers of foolish, sinful, cruel men.

The Christian too often forgets that revealing Cross. It is the sign that whatever may be his sufferings God shares them. The Cross, though a sign, is not isolated on Calvary, any more than Jesus Christ is isolated among men. Its glory illuminates the world ; its shadow lies across it ; for it is one with the world as Christ is one with men. It stands out as He stands out, a sign above all signs, as the mountain-peak stands out above the plain. God, accepting the conditions of His creative act, accepts every consequence it involves. With us He bears our griefs, with us He carries our sorrows, bearing the burden of His worlds. The secret of Calvary is a universal secret ; its revelation is the revealing of the Heart of God. Not a God impassive, remote, but a God incarnate, giving himself in sacrifice, the Saviour as well as the Creator of the

worlds. Not a God alone, apart, but a God living our lives with us. Not a God who is but victim of and with the world, but one who saves it. This God, in and with us men, Calvary has shown us, and in the light and gloom of Calvary we may see Him everywhere.<sup>1</sup> He is our God with us, and sharing His life we look beyond even Calvary to a fulness in which death is swallowed up in victory and sacrifice is crowned. There we discern, although but dimly, the joy of love, that joy which sacrifice augments even among ourselves, and which in God who is perfect love must be perfect too.

In face of the Cross it should be difficult to say, yet there are those who say, that although the divine ordering of providence may be discerned in the world of material things, the world of men, the complicated, conflicting, social world, shows no trace of its working. Indeed that "solidarity of mankind" which "links the crimes of each with the sorrows of all" does introduce an enormous and bewildering complexity into the subject of our inquiry, and seems almost to justify

<sup>1</sup> "Boldly press home the principles of St. Paul, St. John, and Athanasius—'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,' the Father is essentially one with the Son, the life and character of Christ is a real mirror of the life and character of God—and all is changed. God Himself is seen to share the suffering He allows. More than that: by an eternal activity, of which the Death of Christ is both a symbol and also an essential part, He is everlastingly, at the cost of His own effort and His own pain, redeeming and perfecting the world He made. . . . But, . . . orthodox theology was surely right in affirming that, though what we see in Christ is really divine, it is not the Godhead in its totality."—B. H. Streeter, Essay on "God and the World's Pain," p. 36, in "Concerning Prayer" (Macmillan & Co.).

the very worst that is said—but only if we ignore the Cross and its triumphs. And on the other hand that solidarity casts a certain light on the whole of our subject. It manifestly extends beyond mankind. We are apt to forget or ignore the interlocking of each thing with every other thing and of each power with all powers throughout the world, throughout indeed the universe of worlds. More importantly still, we are apt to forget that man himself is interlocked with every one of these, and that the manifestation of God, both through him and through the physical worlds, is conditioned everywhere, not only by one thing or another, one man or another, but by a universal oneness in universal interaction and relation. In man all diversities, conflicts, complexities are reflected and multiplied. No error of the least thing but reaches him; no animal passion that is not his. Every man by his share in the social complex of mankind brings every one of these into social play. The freedom of the world is concentrated and carried to its earthly height in him, the errors and shortcomings of the world have their part with his errors and his crimes and sins. But despite this, the order of the world remains, and for Christians it remains the order of the good providence of God.

We shall never be able in any degree to distinguish the divine ordering in the welter of human life, as we survey it at large (though any one if he will may not only discern this order but feel it and rest upon it in his personal life), unless we recognise also the supreme import of man's solidarity, not only with things and with every living creature lower or higher than himself,

but with God. There are many grades of life presented by a man, and they range from the least and lowest of the elements of his bodily frame to the heights of spirit where life opens out as what we call "eternal"; that is, clearly, gloriously, of the eternal God.<sup>1</sup> There are these many grades and there is this close and intimate solidarity, in one extreme with the lowest things, in the other—at least open to every man—in eternal life with the eternal God. We cannot see the ordering of providence among men if we lose sight of this. Nor can we, if we lose sight of the relative values of these grades of life, and of what the spiritual promise of man implies as to the utter insufficiency of our twenty, forty, eighty years on earth. A life beyond the grave there must in reason be for us, not to redress the balance of life on this side but to carry out the fulfilment of its many promises, to give the divinely spiritual life its opportunity of unending growth.

<sup>1</sup> "We are genuinely like, and we are genuinely unlike, God the Realised Perfection. Hence there is ever a certain tension, a feeling of limitation or of emptiness, a looking for a centre outside of, or other than, our own selves. . . . And so we find a continual reason for self-respect, humility, contrition, each aiding and penetrating the other; and for a faith and certainty which will never be arrogant, and for a diffidence which will never be sceptical.

"There is . . . the keen sense of *Other-Worldliness in contrast with This-Worldliness*. There is here a lively conviction that our spiritual personality, and its full beatitude, can never be attained in this life, but only in the other life, after death; and yet that the other life can be begun in this life, indeed that we are, all of us, more or less solicited, here and now, by that other life, and that we cannot consummate it *there*, unless we begin it *here*. And, in this case, as everywhere, the greater and ultimate has to awake and to grow within us, in and through, and in contrast with, the lesser and (eventually) secondary."—Baron Friedrich von Hügel, "Eternal Life," pp. 366-367 (T. & T. Clark).



At best the problem is too great for us as we are now. Our outlook is too narrow, our ignorance too great. But we may establish for ourselves principles of meeting it ; and where reason fails us faith will carry on, not unreasonably, but with just those same principles as a guide to which our hand may cling through the darkness. Emphatically these are Christian principles and involve the Christian's conviction of the supreme value of spirit and of the eternal—that is, the divinely spiritual—life for every man, and in the purpose of God. They do not invalidate the claims of the life of nature in which that highest life of man is rooted ; but they establish a difference in values, in grades of reality, and a sense of due proportion between one and another. They take man as he really is, a creature of the very highest promise, claim, desire, which only God fulfils, and to which only the eternal life, at work through, maybe, many modes of life and under many conditions other than those of earth, can give expression. And they demand for him a harmony of social life to come, a kingdom of God reaching far beyond the utmost possibilities of even a regenerate earth, in which the promise of both the temporal and the eternal, of the individual and the social, shall be fulfilled. Without this prospect of life not even a Christian can see divine providence ordering all things on earth, and yet face honestly and with an open mind the actual state of man.

“ Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness ; and all these things shall be added unto you.”  
Imagine one town, one county, in which every man

sought first this kingdom. Think of the way in which brother there would care for brother, and all men would be brothers—citizens, by the longing of a prophetic desire, in the City of God. Think of the haste of each to supply the other's need ; the ready, the insistent sharing ; the gift of both coat and cloak ; the company for two miles where only one was asked. It would be a place where no man's piping failed to call out the dancers, and no man's sin or sorrow was borne by himself alone. In such a town or county would any one, do you think, go hungry or cold or naked ? " All these things " would indeed be added unto him.

No doubt such adding presupposes a society, as the saying itself suggests—" Seek ye," and " all things shall be added unto *you*." It presupposes, in fact, the kingdom already begun in a community of desire, already being created by the active going forth of desire. Yet even where one man alone is borne, by his spirit's passion, into such an intensity of desire as admits the influx of spiritually creative power from God, even where there is but one who seeks first the divine kingdom, we often find that to him too—an alien, you might be inclined to say, in a strange land—as much of those things is added as he really needs. Saints do not often starve, though poets may. In men who themselves never look for the kingdom and would tell you, perhaps, that it is the last thing they want, even in such men there lies dormant the spirit's passion for what is good. Even they are capable of admiring, reluctantly it may be and seemingly despite themselves, the real saint—him whose goodness they

may feel as they may feel the beauty of a sunrise on the hills. To holiness that they feel they respond, as sometimes a man's sense of beauty awakes to respond to the rare summons of a poet's song. That song, insistent, pierces through the dulness of his unaccustomed ears and will be heard. So it is with the true saint's appeal of goodness. Francis, in Assisi, finds all things added unto him. Purun Dass, in Kipling's tale, high on his mountain-side, has his begging-bowl filled by villagers who toil to fill it, and are repaid in love.

Think of this and then look at any town, any county or country, as it is. Look at Europe in the throes of the Great War. You cannot but see that if men sought first the divine kingdom, though in other respects just as they are, they would be transformed out of the possibility of war, military or commercial, anti-social in any fashion. The continuance of by far the greater part of the suffering and all the evil of the world is due to this one fact—that men do not seek the kingdom of God first. If they seek it at all they seek it last; that is, when they have done their very utmost to secure first all those things after which "the Gentiles" seek. The vast majority of men are, in truth, those very Gentiles, Christian though many of them may be in name. Our world is in consequence as it is.

We come now to the heart of our inquiry. Would it, or would it not, accord best with the perfection of the divine wisdom and love, if God were to compel men not to seek like the Gentiles, or were so to override what they do as to hinder or correct its consequences? The answer is clear.

If God could contradict Himself, if He could give with one hand and take away with the other, then undoubtedly such things He might do. Equally without doubt He would not be God ; and the world if there were a world would be Chaos. In short, the question is precisely, exactly, absurd. Divine providence orders all things and therefore all things are self-consistently in order. It is within this divine order that we must seek God and shall find Him, not in any chance or chosen breach or opening through it.

Sometimes when men have sufficiently tried the " many inventions " they have devised to satisfy their ever-growing artificial needs, those to which the simple necessities of life have, by a distorting and distorted ingenuity, been made to expand ; when they have tried artifice, complication and luxury to the utmost ; they make a great discovery. They discover within themselves their spirit's hunger. Then, sometimes, like the prodigal son, they arise and go to their Father. Perhaps now, when so many have found human inventions bring on them disaster undreamt of, when the organisation of artificial needs in a society which for its own poor sake shuts out the very thought of a divine kingdom has brought upon them unspeakable woe, they may, in greater numbers, turn to seek Him and begin to desire that divine kingdom where the needs of the spirit come first.

It is by trial and error that in the good providence of God we come to learn that He is best. It is by trial and error that we learn not to set even the real needs of the body before those of the spirit, and to see in

our artificial needs not a refuge from Him, but a barrier against Him, one which turns the providence of His love against ourselves. "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully." Our ground has done this and we have abused its plenty. We have pulled down barns that were ample for the real needs of the fullest earthly life, and have built greater in which to store up for our own selves, in an excess, the free bounty of the earth. We have overfed ourselves and robbed and starved our brothers. We have piled need upon need ; we have built barn after barn to hold what these monstrous needs of ours demand. "Soul," we have said to ourselves, and it was animal soul we meant, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years ; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry." Shall we complain of the providence of God when He so plainly shows us that we are fools ? Can He serve us better than by letting us prove to ourselves what we really are ? "Fool," He says, "thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." In the parable it is "this night" ; in our lives it is all day and every day. Towards a recognition of this inevitable requirement of God, this judgment of every day, His providence directs and leads us. By trial and error we, His sons, discover what it really is that He requires, what it really is that sons of His may be. By trial and error, we say—yet all the while He beckons us, summons us by the voice of our spirits within us, by saints and prophets, by every seeker after truth, by poets and singers, by every adventurer of the spirit, towards the way of life. "I am the way," He says, "the truth and the life."

“Is there any sorrow like unto my sorrow ? ” we may hear the Lover of the world say, amid the roar and clash of its inventions and the moaning of its agonies. Is there any sorrow like unto His who, Himself bearing the world’s grief, holds the secret of its joy and blessedness in His hand and proffers it to be refused ? He comes unceasingly to His own, and His own reject Him. So long as they reject Him, just so long, no longer, they will complain against Him. Is there any sorrow like unto His ?



IV

THE INCARNATION

BY THE REV. C. H. S. MATTHEWS, M.A.

## SYNOPSIS

### I. INTRODUCTORY.

- (a) Faith in Christ strengthened not weakened by freedom of thought.
- (b) Faith must obey the law of dying to live.
- (c) The method of approach.

### II. THE CHRIST OF THE GOSPELS.

- (a) The justification of the cry "Back to Christ."
- (b) The Gospel-portrait.

### III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEOLOGY.

- (a) Pauline and Johannine—the pre-existent eternal Christ.

### IV. A PHILOSOPHY OF THE INCARNATION.

- (a) Consonant with the ideas of Creation and Providence set forth in the preceding Essay.
- (b) The historic Incarnation as the climax and revelation of the secret of the self-expression of God.

### V. THE QUESTION OF THE MODE OF THE INCARNATION.

- (a) Need for frankness.
- (b) Philosophic difficulty of the doctrine of treating the Virgin Birth as historical fact.
- (c) The Scriptural evidence historically insufficient.
- (d) Insistence on acceptance not consonant with our Lord's own demands.
- (e) Modernists and the Creeds. The religious value of debated articles not endangered by treating them as symbolical rather than historical.

### VI. FAITH AND EXPERIENCE.

## THE INCARNATION

*We are far too apt to limit and mechanise the great doctrine of the Incarnation which forms the centre of the Christian faith. . . . "God manifest in the flesh" is a more profound philosophical truth than the loftiest flight of speculation that outsoars all predicates and, for the greater glory of God, declares Him unknowable.—*  
A. S. PRINGLE-PATTISON, "The Idea of God in Recent Philosophy," p. 157.

### I

THE object of this Essay is to set forth a personal interpretation of the doctrine of the Incarnation, in the light of the principle of development expounded in an earlier Essay in this volume. For this reason I begin with a brief positive statement of my faith, the grounds and content of which I shall attempt later to expound in more detail. I want to make clear, if I can, that the truth as it is in Christ Jesus is for me the only truth: that I believe that He was and is perfect man, sharing with us, in its fulness, every element of true manhood, and that I believe, no less firmly, that He was and is perfect God. We see in

Him "in completion, the power of God in thought and in action." <sup>1</sup>

It is true that I am no longer able to rest content with a naïve literalism in the interpretation of the ancient Creeds. But that does not mean, as is sometimes suggested, that my faith in Christ has grown dim, or has in any degree been watered down. The Christological statements of what is commonly called the Nicene Creed mean more, not less, to me now than at any previous time in my life. Further, the longer I live, the more I read, the more I seek for light amid the darkness and sorrow of our own day, the more certain I am that in Jesus Christ, and in Him alone, lies hope for this torn and tormented world. For me to live is Christ, and I am filled with a passionate desire to learn so to live, so to speak, and so to write that I may by His grace help one here and another there, among my fellow-men, to find and know the living Christ and in Him to become saviours of their fellows. I say this at the outset because experience has taught me that there are many who shrink from modern views of Christ and many more who fear even to think seriously about their faith ; not because they justly and prudently doubt their powers of thought, but because they are afraid that they may lose what they have and find nothing to take its place. Although they are well able they do not dare to adventure their faith ; and I would fain persuade them, if I could, that only by such adventure can they really live. The man who runs risks for his Lord's sake gains the reward of having more and more to risk. The man who,

<sup>1</sup> Collingwood, "Religion and Philosophy," p. 153.

for fear of losing it, hides in the earth the talent that would bring him a more enlightened and enlightening faith, betrays his utter misjudgment of the character of the Lord of life. From him there must at last be taken away even that which he seemed to have, an unenlightened faith which, because it is not truly his, must in the day of testing fall away. The chief justification for such faithless fear of thinking to the utmost of a man's power lies in the fact that those who express modern views often seem to lack vital and effective energy. The logic of liberal theologians may be unanswerable—so the timid feel, often subconsciously—but a living faith must surely be something warmer, richer and fuller than is commonly to be found in liberal expositions of the Christian belief. In so far as this feeling is justified it is because reaction from the strong obscurantism, which is still so dominant in the Church, naturally leads those who know the necessity of thought to an over-emphasis upon the intellectual side of religion. But in these days men are learning that there is no necessary divorce between thought and enthusiasm.

Still it remains true that thought is a painful process, for there is no escape from the law that we must die to live, and must agonise if we are to bring new joy into the world. The alternative to thought is to live in a world of illusion and to attempt to satisfy the hunger of our souls by feeding them upon empty dreams. Surely in such an age as ours we cannot be content with anything less than a candid and constant search after reality. If it has ever seemed reasonable not to worship God with all our

mind, that time has gone by. Traditional notions about God's revelation of Himself in the past are quite useless to us unless we are finding the living God in the present. And because life moves onward and our organised experience is continually growing,<sup>1</sup> it should never be held, as it sometimes is, that what was good enough for our fathers is good enough for us, or even that what was good enough for a man at twenty-five is good enough for the same man at thirty.

The only alternative to a faith that grows and changes because it is alive, is a faith that in spite of seeming permanence decays and dies. There is no stationary point in the movement of a personal life.

And there are three further reasons why it is impossible for us, though many try to do so, to take our stand simply upon acceptance of the Creeds. First, the statements of the Creeds are themselves a development of the earlier faith of the Gospel, and it is merely arbitrary to allow this movement of thought up to the time when the latest Creed was compiled and then come to a full stop. Secondly, we have to remember (what is indeed a commonplace among theologians) that the statements of the Creeds were designed less to define the truth exhaustively than to rule out certain errors and false opinions current in the age in which they were compiled. And, thirdly, whether we think it desirable or not that it should be so, the Creeds do in fact mean different things to different men. Some simple folk undoubtedly interpret all their clauses as though they were literal and factual history ;

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Pringle Pattison, "The Idea of God in Recent Philosophy," p. 248 : cf. p. 17 *supra*



others regard some clauses as historical and others as symbolical, and among these latter controversy rages as to where the line between symbolism and fact is to be drawn. So, whether we will or no, if the Creeds are to mean anything to us we are compelled to ask what they mean and try to find an answer.

Since the Creeds are mainly intended to summarise, in response to opposition, the revelation of God made in and by Jesus of Nazareth, with regard to questions in dispute, it is essential, if we are to try to learn more of the content of that revelation, that we should go back to what we know about His life and character and teaching. We must try to find out what on the whole He stood for. We must try to apprehend something of the secret of His life.

There are, of course, many other ways in which we may approach the doctrine of the Incarnation. We may approach it from the side of history. We may ask how the doctrine arose and took its traditional form ; or we may come to it from the side of theology and discuss the meaning and implications of the doctrine and its relation to other doctrines of the Church ; or again we may study it from the side of modern philosophy and ask what place, (if any) the doctrine can hold in relation to our view of the universe. But plainly no writer could hope, from whatever side he approaches this subject, to do more in a brief Essay than suggest in outline a point of view, and possibly help to remove some of the difficulties which are keeping men of good will to-day from the full joy of a reasonable faith.

## II

I propose, therefore, to begin this discussion by going back to the Christ of the Gospels and attempting to red'scover what men of good will saw in Him which drew them to Him and made them His enthusiastic disciples. And I shall do so for two reasons. First, because I believe it to be true of any great religious teacher that the traditional conception of his personality and his work needs constantly to be corrected by reference to the contemporary records in which they are enshrined.

“The individual,” it has been well said, is never “exhausted in that part of him which becomes the common property of his successors. The prophet attracts a school, and through it his work is continued and becomes in part incorporate in the belief and practices of men. But there is always something in the individual to which men return when the ‘ism’ which is called by his name grows cold and inadequate. It was necessary that he should become thus institutionalised, as it was necessary that Christ should become the foundation of that mass of custom and doctrine which men identify with the Church. But the founder is always more than the institution and than the theory built on his work. To that ‘more’ men must ever return—to the intellectual faith of Plato from the diverse opinions which pass as Platonism, to the life and person of Christ from the warring organisations which compete for His name. Through organisations and generalities his work flows back into the general body of social life. But it is never ex-

hausted in this ; it finds its fulfilment in the individual inspiration and endeavour of his spiritual children, through whom it begets ever richer values in relation to changed circumstances and fuller knowledge. Always the individual is more than the general, and through the individual the spirit enters more fully into its heritage.”<sup>1</sup>

So the cry “ Back to Christ,” which is ever and anon raised in the Christian Church, is always justified. And every time this appeal from tradition to its original source is made, by honest and faithful seekers after truth, we do in fact gain new knowledge of the Founder of our faith, and enrich and correct tradition. It seems to me that for this reason we can to-day know far more of the historic Jesus than any previous age has known. And while this would be true were He merely one great teacher among others, His equals, it must be peculiarly true if He is what the Church claims that He is—the very secret and centre of the history of the whole universe. For if He is that, then all knowledge and all truth meet in Him ; and every increase of real knowledge, of whatever kind, helps us to know Him more fully. We are not worse off, as we are sometimes tempted to think, but better off than the first disciples, just in so far as our knowledge of the context of Christ Jesus in the universe is richer and fuller than theirs. We shall return to this aspect of our subject later ; I only mention it now as a justification for this method of approaching the central doctrine of the Christian Creed.

What then, we ask, do we know of the character

<sup>1</sup> A. C. Turner, Essay on “ Faith, Prayer, and the World’s Order,” in “ Concerning Prayer,” p. 401.

of the Christ who is portrayed for us in the records ? What did His contemporaries think of Him ? What is the secret of the impression made by Him upon those who accepted and those who rejected Him ? We cannot here go into questions of the detailed criticism of the synoptic Gospels or of any of the New Testament records—to attempt to do so (even if the present writer were a competent guide in such matters, which he certainly is not) would be futile within such limits as this Essay imposes. We need only consider the broad outlines of the life and character of Christ as it is presented to us in the synoptic Gospels, and for the present we may leave on one side those beautiful stories of the Nativity which find no place in the earliest Gospel, and raise problems which must later be discussed. Taking then in the main the earliest Gospel—that of St. Mark—as our basis, and supplementing it with such knowledge of the sayings of the Master as are recorded in the first and third Gospels, which are generally agreed to be dependent for many of these sayings upon a common literary source, we get a portrait which enables us to arrive at a clear idea of the character of Christ and His attitude towards God, towards the world, and towards human life and its possibilities. We get a portrait of Him first of all as a man : for it is obvious that at first it was as a man, and only as a man, that He was regarded by those amongst whom He lived. Further, the same records show Him in contrast with—and ultimately in conflict with—the other religious teachers of the Church of His day, and enable us to see wherein His religion differed from the traditional religion of the time.

St. Luke tells us that Jesus was about thirty years of age when He began His public ministry. He was a young man and all His previous life had been spent in the little village of Nazareth. There His character had been formed, His sense of mission gained. Professors G. A. Smith<sup>1</sup> and Ramsay,<sup>2</sup> Dr. Glover,<sup>3</sup> and others have helped us to see something of the influence of the surroundings in which His early years were passed upon the formation of His convictions and His character. Several strands may be detected in that influence. First there is that of home. It may indeed be said that no other teacher ever preached so homelike a religion. Much of His teaching about God and life is drawn from the common incidents of home life ; the very name by which He addressed, and taught His disciples to address, the Creator of the universe must have been one of the words He first learned to utter in His own home at Nazareth. Indeed for Him the whole idea of true life is homely. God is the Father, and men's true relation to Him is that of sons, and to one another that of brothers.<sup>4</sup> It requires an effort of imagination for us, who all our lives have been taught to call God "our Father," to realise the liberating power of this word among men accustomed to think of God according to the fashion

<sup>1</sup> "The Historical Geography of the Holy Land," by G. A. Smith, D.D., LL.D., Litt.D. (Hodder and Stoughton).

<sup>2</sup> "The Education of Christ," by W. M. Ramsay, D.C.L. (Hodder and Stoughton).

<sup>3</sup> "The Jesus of History," by T. R. Glover (Student Christian Movement).

<sup>4</sup> Though this is true there seems to be a tendency nowadays to attribute to our Lord an emphasis upon the importance of domesticity which is really not to be found in the Gospels at all.

of the people of our Lord's own day, whether Jews or Gentiles, and to worship Him as they worshipped Him. Secondly, there is to be seen in every page of the Gospel record the influence of nature—the love of flowers and birds; the sunrise and the sunset; rain and wind and open air, and the spacious solitude of the everlasting hills—and of man co-operating with nature in processes which to the seeing eye revealed the character and the methods of God—the God who makes His sun to shine upon the just and the unjust, who clothes the lily, and sows the seed of eternal life, patiently waiting for it to bring forth fruit. Thirdly, there is the influence of the ancient Scriptures of His people illuminating for Him the historic scenes upon which He must have looked down so often from the hills surrounding His home. Professor G. A. Smith has given us the classic description of Nazareth and its surroundings upon which many subsequent writers have drawn.<sup>1</sup> He has told us how Nazareth lies in a little basin among the hills the edge of which “is everywhere within the limit of the village boys' playground.” He has described, so vividly that we can almost see it with our own eyes, the wonderful view—“thirty miles in three directions”—from the top of the southern hills. There is Esdraelon, the most famous battleground of Israel's history, where again and again the fortunes of the nation had hung in the balance, surrounded by scene after scene of historic interest, Tabor and Moreh and Gilboa, Endor and Carmel and the Valley of Megiddo—scenes of great victories and tragic defeats, all alike interpreted in

<sup>1</sup> G. A. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 432.



the Scriptures as evidence of the overruling providence of God and His care for His chosen people. And even more entrancing to the boy Jesus must have been the contemporary life so vividly described by the same graphic pen—the throngs of pilgrims going to and fro from Jerusalem, the merchants of Egypt and the caravans of Midian and Damascus, and the pomp of that other road seen from the northern hills, where “legions marched and princes swept with their retinues and all sorts of travellers from all countries went to and fro.” “Galilee of the Gentiles” must have been a curiously cosmopolitan place, a place of much eager and diverse life, through which passed in a continual stream men of many strange races and, to the mind of the Jewish boy, more strange religious customs.

To the influence of home and the interplay of past with present in the life of Palestine within the imaginative mind of Jesus, there must, then, be added another strand in the formation of His human character and teaching, the reaction between familiarity with the cosmopolitan life, so conspicuous in His own neighbourhood, and the proud and exclusive nationalism which was the mark of the religious leaders among the Jewish people.

Of His keen interest in the life of Galilee there are many traces in the Gospel. He noted, for instance, the strange mechanical methods of worship of the Gentiles,<sup>1</sup> the doctrine of might as right, which underlay their imperialistic systems,<sup>2</sup> and their worldly-mindedness.<sup>3</sup> Yet He welcomed and encouraged

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vi. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xxii. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. vi. 32.

among them, as among His own people, every sign of true vitality.

Again we must note the profound impression that must have been made upon the mind of Jesus by pilgrimages to Jerusalem, such as that recorded at the end of the second chapter of St. Luke's Gospel. Surely so sensitive a mind as His must have been torn by conflicting emotions as He went up for the first time to the Temple for the Passover. If the splendour of historic associations and memories thrilled him, as they must have done, the actual sights and odours of the Temple, the bleatings and the struggles of the lambs, the insensitiveness of the priests, and of those who actually slaughtered the lambs, their hands and knives dripping with the blood of the innocent slain, the sickly smell of the blood itself—all these things must have helped to form in His mind the idea of a worship in which mercy and loving obedience should altogether take the place of such sacrifices, and perfect hearkening to the voice of the living God do away for ever with offerings of the fat of rams.

Perhaps even then there began to form in His mind the idea of a new Temple and a new Temple service—a Passover meal of the kind which long years after He desired with a great longing to eat with His disciples. It must have been much later in life that He came gradually to see how the opposition of the priests of that very Temple would harden until their hands were reddened with His own blood.

Yet another element in the formation of His mind was undoubtedly His familiarity with contemporary apocalyptic ideas. Whether He gained this familiarity

from written books or, as is perhaps more likely, from wandering teachers and the common talk of the synagogues is a small matter. What is much more important is that He Himself accepted the apocalyptic view of the coming of the Kingdom of God and, probably at the time of His baptism, reached the conviction that He Himself was the Messiah, the Son of Man, or Son of God, of popular expectation. This seems to be beyond dispute, but it is surely just as much beyond dispute that the content of all the apocalyptic phrases and ideas in the mind and teaching of Jesus was infinitely fuller and richer than in the minds and teaching of His contemporaries. The delusion which has possessed the minds of many critics (and also the materialistic philosophers) that ideas, and even persons, are to be judged by their earthly origin and environment and not by their capacity for enrichment and growth, or by the meaning they have acquired during the course of their development, has never been more clearly shown to be false than in the case of the apocalyptic element in the teaching of Jesus. It has been assumed that He used apocalyptic terms in exactly the same sense as that in which they were used in, for example, the Book of Enoch and the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs.<sup>1</sup> No account has been taken of the immensely deeper, richer and fuller content which is given to the apocalyptic words by the sense in which Jesus Himself used them and

<sup>1</sup> These have now been made available for the ordinary reader, in a cheap and attractive form, in the series of "Translations of Early Documents," edited by W. O. E. Oesterly, D.D., and G. H. Box, published by S. P. C. K.

Christians, filled with His Spirit, have interpreted them. The very phrase "the Kingdom of God" becomes born again with new meaning on the lips of One by whom God is proclaimed as first and last a loving Father, and the Kingdom is interpreted as a spiritual presence within the hearts of men, destined to re-create the world according to the law of its own life, that is to say, the law of Love.

The truth is that the attempt to express the personality of Christ and the essence of His teaching in a simple formula has failed over and over again, and must always fail because of the wealth and many-sidedness of His personality and of His recorded teaching. Every such attempt has indeed been abundantly justified by the special contribution it has made to our fuller understanding by bringing to light new or neglected elements in the life of Jesus. To know this is in itself a great solvent of fear when any completely new theory of Christ is sprung upon us. On the one hand we can be sure that if it is the fruit of honest effort and sound learning it will have something to contribute to our knowledge of our Lord, and, on the other, that in so far as it professes to be a complete exposition of His character it will certainly be found to be inadequate. The fate of every startling new theory is the same. It is never found to contain the whole truth, but such truth as it does contain becomes, in time, incorporated in the common mind.

In regard to the apocalyptic theory it is misleading to speak as though there were no other element but the apocalyptic in the teaching of Christ, or

to forget that the terms used by Him must be interpreted rather in the light of His teaching as a whole than in that of their contemporary use. Three principles help us here to a right interpretation of the mind of Christ. First, no teacher can really get into touch with the minds of his contemporaries unless he uses the language of his age. Secondly, the greater the teacher the more content he will give to the language he uses—as the word love in the mouth of a great lover means infinitely more than it means when used by lesser men; and, thirdly, no doubt in the case of our Lord as in the case of lesser teachers, the very newness and greatness of the teaching, while on the one hand it ensures the preservation of many unforgettable sayings, yet in other cases, where the hearing ear is absent, leads to unconscious misinterpretation.

But in any case the apocalyptic strand in the training and teaching of Christ is only one among others, and in a most important particular, to which we must return later, the apocalyptic vision is endowed by Him with a new and deeper meaning through His conception of the way by which it was to be fulfilled. It is sufficient here to note that “The whole tendency of (Jewish) apocalyptic, as we know it, is hostile to the attribution of anything but triumph to the Messiah, and this was only natural since the writers were all dealing with the good times coming.”<sup>1</sup> The triumph pictured by Christ was different in kind from that pictured by His contemporaries, and the method by which

<sup>1</sup> Leslie Johnston, Article “The Suffering Servant in St. Mark,” *The Interpreter* April, 1916.

alone it could be accomplished was altogether foreign to their minds.

It is hardly necessary to say that, in thus attempting to distinguish certain features in the circumstances of our Lord's early life, I am in no way suggesting that these formed that unique personality or determined the character of His mission and His teaching. There must have been many boys in Nazareth subjected to precisely the same influences, at the same time, without becoming in any degree what He became. No man is really in the last resort determined by his circumstances, least of all the Man who was to become the centre of the whole world's history and life. Yet the attempt to distinguish among those circumstances is worth making because such an analysis, however inadequate it may be, does help us to understand better something of the amazing mansidedness of His character, and something of the way in which He gathered up into Himself, purified of every unworthy and untrue element, the significance of past tradition and of the life of His own time.

The supreme differentia of Jesus as a teacher seems plainly due to that which no external circumstance could ensure—His awareness of the presence of the living God whom He knew as Love, in all the world's life, especially in men, and most intimately in Himself ; and of the relationship to Himself and to His Father of those whom "He was not ashamed to call His brethren." A marked characteristic of the Jesus of the Gospels is an immense inherent vitality. At every point He is completely and fully alive. And always



He governs circumstances. Nothing is too small to attract His notice, no human being and no human interest are beyond the reach of His attention. He seems to gather up into His own person all the life of the world and then to give it back again enriched and purified to all who can receive it and to each according to his capacity for receiving it.

So we come to what St. Mark calls "the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," the preaching of John the Baptist with its emphasis upon the immediate coming of the Kingdom of God, and the Messiah who will baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Yet to John Jesus comes to be baptized, His mind plainly dominated on the one hand by a sense of the truth of John's preaching and on the other by the sense of His own personal vocation. The accounts of His baptism are obviously records of an experience of God so vivid as to be beyond expression—a thing to be suggested by poetic symbol rather than described in prose.

There follows the Temptation in the Wilderness into which Jesus (as St. Mark puts it) is "driven out" by the tempestuous spirit within Him, to realise His mission and to decide upon His future action in the light of His sense of unique relationship to His Father. The Temptation narratives in St. Matthew and St. Luke show us the Lord in the completeness of His own freedom tempted in all points like as we are, deliberately choosing and rejecting different manners of life, different ways of interpreting His sense of Sonship ("If thou art the Son of God") and of attempting to establish the Kingdom of God upon earth.

The first temptation is to use His power for individual rather than for universal ends, to take what the world offered Him and make use of it at the dictate of His own individual impulses as they arose. The second (adopting the order in St. Matthew) was to try to fulfil literally, rather than spiritually, the common expectation of the people and so to exercise a kind of moral compulsion incompatible with the true freedom of perfect love. The third surely was to win the kingdoms of the world, as the zealots would have desired, by force, even in the hope, which He must always have cherished, of thereafter turning the victory to spiritual account. Jesus rejected this temptation because He had the faith, so often lacking in His followers, to trust to spiritual means for the accomplishment of spiritual ends. There can be no sort of question in the mind of any reader of the Gospel, unprejudiced by *a priori* notions of what is or is not possible to the Son of God, that these temptations were utterly real—a matter of deliberate choice of alternatives, made with an agony of thought and prayer.

The rest of the Gospel shows the working out in life of the ideals of the Baptism and the plans of the wilderness. It is not necessary to attempt to follow the narrative in detail. It has been said that in St. Mark's Gospel Jesus appears as "a wonder-worker, dominating the crowds, more set on dying for men than on reforming their religion,"<sup>1</sup> and the same writer proceeds to quote the saying of another scholar, "Till our eyes become accustomed to the atmosphere, it is

<sup>1</sup> Nairne, "The Epistle of Priesthood," p. 76.

difficult to recognise the conventional Saviour with the gentle unindividualized face in the strong mysterious Personage portrayed by the second Gospel." <sup>1</sup>

There is truth in these statements, but perhaps we may now see that they bear the marks of the not yet fully considered theories of the apocalyptic school of modern critics. Certainly they do less than justice to the all-embracing humanity of the Man who is depicted in this Gospel as mingling so naturally and freely with publicans and sinners, as taking little children into His arms and blessing them, and as using the most familiar illustrations in His preaching of the Kingdom. There is sensitive feeling depicted in Him as well as stern purpose. If it is a relief to find in the portrait none of the weak sentimentality of popular imaginings; we may recognise in the Jesus of St. Mark a "heart of love" as well as a "spirit of steel." <sup>2</sup>

Consider, again, St. Mark's record of our Lord's treatment of the Syro-Phœnician woman, with its keen and spontaneous appreciation no less of the aptness of the woman's answer than of her vivid faith. It is a revelation at once of His inclusive Catholicity and of His recognition of the right and duty of the individual to form a personal judgment. Equally noteworthy in this connection is St. Mark's report of our Lord's summary of the law in which, with what a modern writer calls "a brilliant flash of

<sup>1</sup> Burkitt, "The Earliest Sources for the Life of Jesus," p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the remarkable lines by Wilfrid Brinton found on the body of an Australian soldier killed in action in the South African War, quoted by the Rev. N. S. Talbot on page 75 of his "Thoughts on Religion at the Front" (Macmillan & Co.).

the highest genius," He links a text in Deuteronomy with one in Leviticus—"Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" (Deut. vi, 4-5), and He adds "the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these" (Levit. xix, 18; Mark xii, 29-31). "Thus His instinct for God and His instinct for the essential carry Him to the very centre and acme of Moses' law."<sup>1</sup> It is worth pointing out that, characteristically, even as he quotes, Jesus adds to the Deuteronomic text the words, which find no place in the original, "and with all thy mind." Those who bid us forgo the fullest use of the human reason in religion can hardly have noticed this significant addition. It might almost be described as the charter of free thought within the Christian Church.

Happily, it is not necessary here to consider the question of whether all the accounts of miracles are to be treated as literal reports of facts, in the purely modern sense of the words. Every man who apprehends more than his contemporaries of the true nature of God and man, or of the order of God's universe, emphasises that which for his own age is supernatural. But the supernatural of one age becomes natural in later ages. So, certainly, much that Jesus said and wrought was supernatural to His contemporaries but has already become natural for us, and more will doubtless become natural as men grow in the apprehension of His teaching

<sup>1</sup> Glover, "The Jesus of History," p. 62.

and life. Few Churchmen have sufficient faith to understand the great saying "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto the Father." But whatever view we take concerning this or that miracle it must surely be admitted that the records, however interpreted, are the best possible evidence of the overwhelming belief of the writers in the omnipotence of the love which was incarnate in their Master.<sup>1</sup> It is only necessary to remind ourselves that, from the beginning of the Gospel to the end, our Lord is represented as strongly deprecating the demand for the miraculous. "He is not interested in what men call 'signs,' in the exceptional thing; the ordinary suffices when one sees God in it."<sup>2</sup> For Jesus the whole world is God's great miracle. He is to be found in every common sight by those who have eyes to see. Only those who "having eyes see not and having ears hear

<sup>1</sup> Loisy's comment on the miracle at Cana in Galilee is worth reproducing in this connection. "La question qui se pose tout de suite devant le lecteur moderne, à savoir, s'il s'agit d'un fait réel, n'est pas ce qui préoccupait l'auteur. Pour lui, la vérité de la narration ne consiste pas dans son rapport avec la réalité matérielle d'un fait ancien, mais dans son aptitude à représenter sensiblement une réalité spirituelle."—"Le Quatrième Évangile," p. 284. These words apply, of course, with peculiar force to the author of the Fourth Gospel, but no discussion of the question of miracles which does not take into full account the differences between the outlook of the modern man and that of the Christian writer and reader of the early centuries of the Christian era is worthy of serious consideration. An admirable discussion of the question of Miracle from the side of philosophy is to be found in a recent book, "Religion and Philosophy," by R. G. Collingwood (Macmillan & Co).

<sup>2</sup> Glover, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

not " demand miracles as a sign of God's presence, love and power. He could not, being what He was, attempt to force belief in Himself or in His Father. He had too profound a faith in the power of love and in the freedom love demands to seek to compel the allegiance of men. The thought of doing so had come to Him as a temptation of the Devil in the wilderness, and He had decisively rejected it there. Whensoever that temptation recurred it was as decisively rejected. Only men who are blind to the continual presence of God within His world, and especially within the human heart, will insist upon the necessity to faith of signs from Heaven in support of His overwhelming spiritual claims. So He proceeds on His unswerving path towards the goal : mingling freely and naturally with men of all classes, paying no attention to social and ecclesiastical tests and conventions : speaking, as occasion offers, with an authority which came not from ecclesiastical office, or mere book-learning such as that of the scribes, but from His knowledge of the heart and mind of God and man : marvelling that other men should be so blind to the great reality of God's presence : attracting all those who had any capacity for love and were content to judge Him and His words by their own God-given sense of values, and repelling all those who judged by reference to traditional formulæ and the accepted shibboleths of the Church of their day.

Wherever He went He attracted attention and aroused questioning by the untrammelled freshness of His thought and the wonder of His love. Men could not help forming and expressing theories concerning His personality—some thinking of Him as a re-incar-



nation of John the Baptist, or Elijah, and others as certainly a true prophet. His enemies saw in Him only one possessed of the very power of Beelzebub. But those who saw deepest came to see in Him a greater than any of the prophets of old—the looked-for Messiah who was to be the Saviour of His people.

From the time of St. Peter's great confession (St. Mark viii, 31) it is easy to see the change that seems to overshadow the whole narrative. Our Lord instantly realizes what such an acknowledgment will involve for Him and His followers, in view of the already bitter opposition of the ecclesiastical world. It is then that, with an intuition foreign to the Apocalyptists of His day, He seems to have identified Himself, as the Messiah, with the suffering servant of the second Isaiah,<sup>1</sup> and from that time right up to the end He devotes Himself to preparing His disciples for the suffering and death which, ever more and more plainly, He foresees. Only so is God's Kingdom to come. Nothing less than the utmost self-giving of the Cross will manifest God as He knows Him to the world. In the Last Supper He sums up His life and the meaning of His approaching death in the symbols that gather up into themselves the life of God and man, and all the joy and all the toil and agony of the world—the broken bread, the out-poured wine—and so goes forth to the supreme sacrifice and sacrament of the Cross.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mark viii, 31 ; ix, 12 ; ix, 31, and x, 23, with Isaiah xlv, 4-9, and liii.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the present writer's Essay on the Eucharist in "Concerning Prayer" (Macmillan & Co.), pp. 296 ff.

Surely, if this brief recapitulation of the story of the earliest Gospel is true, as far as it goes, everything positive concerning His person that has been most passionately insisted upon by different schools of thought in the Church has foundation in the Gospel. St. Mark calls Him by the Messianic title the Son of God. He loves to call Himself the Son of Man. And both these titles are filled for us, through the study of Him who bears them, with meaning infinitely fuller and richer than they bore in the contemporary usage of His day. For, by His own life and words, He gave to the words "God" and "man" new content. He revealed the true character of God : the undreamed-of wonder of His love : the reality of His presence above and in the world, which was so plainly to Him, in its many-graded existence, the very utterance of the Divine Being, and capable of becoming the very Sacrament of His Kingdom. He revealed no less the true character of man. He saw and made manifest in His own person the hitherto unimagined possibilities of human nature, when man, like the Prodigal Son in the parable, "comes to himself." To believing man, as to God, all things are possible.<sup>1</sup>

Man's true nature is not alien from God's : nay, they are one and the same. This we learn from Jesus. In Him we see, not two incompatible natures, subsisting separate in one Person, like oil and water in a common vessel, as men have thought, so that they have vainly attempted to discriminate between what Jesus did as man and what He did as God, but one consistent Person—the Divine Man—thinking, speak-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mark ix, 23, and x, 27.

ing, and acting as one, and always, to those who have faith, at one and the same time truly human and truly divine.

So the Catholic is altogether right when he insists upon the Sacrament of the Incarnation and consequently upon the sacramental character of the Church and of all true religion : the Evangelical is right when he insists upon the saving value of the Cross and the primary necessity of faith to salvation : the Liberal is right when, in his turn, he insists upon the fitness, nay, the necessity, of the freest use of the human reason in estimating the character of Christ and the nature of true religion. All are right ; and all too are wrong in so far as they deny each other's truth or claim that they alone hold the secret of Christ's life and death.

### III

Already in St. Mark's Gospel we have the root of Christian theology. But it must be remembered that that Gospel was not written until many years after the events recorded had happened, and that the author (though, according to a tradition which is generally held to be trustworthy, mainly dependent on St. Peter) had at one time companied with St. Paul, and that there is some evidence of St. Paul's influence upon his mind. It is worth remembering that St. Paul had probably been martyred some years before St. Mark's Gospel appeared.

To St. Paul is due the first important development

of Christian theology. He was the great modernist of his day, and it is easy, when the revolutionary character of his teaching is grasped, to understand the bitter opposition, not merely of the unbelieving Jews, but even of many among the earliest Jewish Christians. The former felt towards him what those who cling to any ancient Church are tempted to feel towards one who has deserted them for another community, especially if the apostate is a man of marked power and the faith for which he has left them is in their eyes a new and contemptible heresy. The latter, who regarded their own faith in Jesus as in no way incompatible with Jewish orthodoxy, clung to Jewish ideas of order and privilege, and resented the free inclusion within the Church, upon the same footing as themselves, of Gentiles who were not compelled to obey the law.

St. Paul's doctrine of the Incarnation is determined by his own overwhelming religious experience. It is to this that he continually makes his appeal, and it is of course the only ground of appeal that ever has swayed or can sway masses of men. St. Paul, like his Master, spoke with authority and not as the scribes—with the superior authority of a living faith over a mere tradition.

It is worth while, then, to consider, in the briefest possible outline, the experience and the resulting theology of St. Paul. His spiritual ancestry and development are plain. A Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, he was also a freeborn citizen of Rome and a native of a thoroughly cosmopolitan town, Tarsus—a Greek University city. He shared to the full the current apoca-

lyptic thought of his day. This apocalyptic thought, to which reference has already been made, was in some measure a development of the teaching of the Wisdom-Literature, with its semi-personal conception of the Divine Wisdom.<sup>1</sup> It centred in the thought of a pre-existent divine or supernatural being—the Elect One of God, the Messiah, the inner principle of, and the divine agent in, all creation, who was expected to appear suddenly from Heaven to save His elect from among the Jewish people, to overthrow all the kingdoms of the earth and to establish the Messianic Kingdom in their stead.<sup>2</sup> To Saul of Tarsus, possessed by this expectation and filled, at the same time, with the reverence of a Hebrew of the Hebrews for the divinely-given Law, and, moreover, proud as it seems of his own familiarity with Greek wisdom and his acquaintance with the mystery religions of his time, the Cross was necessarily a stumbling-block. That the disciples should proclaim a mere man as being the promised Messiah was bad; that that claim should be made on behalf of one who gloried in being not a ruler but a servant<sup>3</sup> was worse; that they should preach a suffering Messiah was in itself an outrage; but that they should preach as Messiah One who died the death of which it was written in the holy Law itself, “Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a Tree,” was the supreme and unpardonable blasphemy.

So it is easy to understand the fierceness with which the young Pharisee joined in the attempt to stamp out

<sup>1</sup> *Cf. e.g.* Proverbs, viii.

<sup>2</sup> *Cf. e.g.* Enoch xlviiii–li, pp. 66–69, edition S. P. C. K.

<sup>3</sup> *Cf.* Philippians i, 7; Mark x. 44, 45.

this pernicious heresy. But, fanatic though he was, Saul was a man of too vivid an intelligence, too strong feelings and too genuine a desire to serve the living God to be impervious, as so many of his fellows were, to reality. In the first place, he well knew in his heart of hearts that the law had not saved him. He was divided against himself. He acknowledged the law's validity, but could not perform its demands. His heart's desire was unsatisfied. And as he stood and watched the stoning of Stephen, the first preacher to assert that the new faith would be destructive of the Law and the Temple, the thought must have struck him that this man, who died declaring that he saw Jesus in the glory of His Messiahship, displayed a courage which bore witness to the genuineness of his faith. And in Stephen's prayer for his murderers Saul could not but note a new spirit, different from that of the last martyr of the old dispensation, who prayed "the Lord look upon it and require it." It was in vain that he strove to fortify his waning conviction by greater zeal and activity in the cause of orthodoxy, and it was in a state of deep mental distress that he set out upon the famous journey to Damascus. Then the Light shone and the Voice spoke which told him that in persecuting the followers of Jesus he was persecuting the very Messiah for whose honour he was so zealous—"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"

Here, it seems, we have the core of all St. Paul's theology. The Crucified Jesus was the pre-existent Messiah, as Stephen and his fellow Christians had said. He had, then, fulfilled expectation, but in a manner different from and beyond expectation. He



had laid aside His glory, He had not counted His equality with God as a privilege He ran any risk of losing; He had emptied Himself, that He might be born of a woman, and under the law, becoming a man, a servant, even in men's eyes a felon, dying the death of an outcast: so low had Divine Love stooped that it might save. And yet Jesus was alive, alive and glorified. He was back in the glorious world from which He had come, yet not as isolated from men, but as one with all who believed in Him: identified with them in all their sufferings, as their own true life—so that the believer could say “I live and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me.” Therefore the members of the beloved community of His followers were one with Him and with each other, sharers of a common life—His life—in virtue of the free gift of His spirit to them all. LOVE then was His name: “He loved me and gave Himself for me.” To be one with Him was to love. Without love, showy gifts, speaking with tongues, prophesying, knowledge of the divine secrets, and the rest were all empty and vain. None of them in itself was worth anything. And since this was so the sum of them all was equally nothing. “For St. Paul Love is the numeral before the ciphers.” Given that, every additional gift multiplies a man's talents by ten. And so true to the Gospel values is St. Paul's estimate, that if you substitute the name of Christ for “love” in his greatest chapter you get an estimate of the character of our Lord which corresponds with the portrait of Him in the synoptic records. He suffered long, and was kind, vaunted not Himself, was not puffed up, did not behave Himself unseemly,

sought not His own, was not provoked, thought no evil, rejoiced not in iniquity, but rejoiced in the truth, bore all things, believed all things, hoped all things, endured all things, He never failed.

So though Christianity is in a sense born again in St. Paul, though he could only express its truth as he saw it, and in the language of his own age and under forms determined largely by his own individual training and his own life-giving experience, the central core and spirit of the Gospel remain unchanged. His experience is one with the experience of those who before him had found new life in Christ.

So too with St. Paul's doctrine of the Eucharist. Unquestionably the form in which he expressed his Eucharistic teaching was influenced by the language and even the ideas of the mystery religions of his day. Yet that language and those ideas were completely reborn in him, if for no other reason than because they had never been the form in which his own religious experience naturally expressed itself. In fact, we may be sure he would never have used those particular forms at all had he been writing to Jews. He used them with the true intuition of the born missionary desirous of making himself "all things to all men," of finding a point of contact with the minds of his converts, because he knew that as the old forms of his own religion determined the first expression of his own faith, so his converts could never get at his meaning unless he expressed his truth in a language with which they were familiar.

In this again we see what we saw in the case of our Lord. The new faith gathered up into itself

and transformed the thought-forms of its own age by raising them to a higher level and giving them a deeper meaning. But this had two consequences. First, it was inevitable that for St. Paul himself (and for his disciples also) the first expression of his new faith would prove to be inadequate. We cannot help seeing that this was the case when we compare, for instance, the Epistle to the Thessalonians with his later Epistles. His own faith was a living and growing thing. Particular beliefs were modified with the growth of experience and the course of the Church's history. The old religion underwent its transformation and its fulfilment. The new content, the far greater reality, given to old words and even old rites (such as Baptism and the Eucharistic meal) made it certain that men would no longer be content with their earlier and cruder expression of the faith. And, secondly, the fact that the faith thus expressed itself in the forms natural to that age meant that, as men's thoughts changed and their ideas of the world and of divine and human personality grew, it would need to be re-stated over and over again in subsequent ages.

With the Fourth Gospel we see yet a further development of the faith of the Church. The writer of that Gospel obviously wrote in literary dependence upon the synoptic record, which he treated with almost as much freedom as St. Paul used in his treatment of the Old Testament. He wrote, also, when the controversy within the Church, between the Judaising party and the Pauline modernist, had been finally settled. He wrote in view of the controversies in

which he found himself plunged. A careful study of the Gospel gives the reader a wonderfully clear picture of the relation of the Ephesian Church, probably early in the second century, to the Jewish Church of the writer's place and time, to the community of those who had been baptized with the Baptism of John but (unlike the men mentioned in Acts xix) had never joined the Christian Church, to half-hearted Jewish and Hellenistic inquirers, and so forth.<sup>1</sup>

But what especially concerns us here is the doctrine of the Incarnation. In regard to this, historical interest is entirely subordinated to a theology which has left behind the apocalyptic period, and which has to meet the fact that the immediate second Advent, so eagerly expected when St. Paul first wrote and the hope of which he never quite abandoned, is seen to be not of the *esse* of the Christian faith. Here the conception of eternal life as a present experience has taken the place of life in the Messianic Kingdom. By this time the Messianic title "the Son of God" has come to have a new meaning which prepared the way in its turn for the later theology of the Creeds, and faith has come to imply not so much the acceptance of certain statements about the Christ as insight into the spiritual realities of life and the inner meaning of Christ's acts and words. The Gospel is written with a religious and theological aim, that its readers "may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and believing may have life in His Name." The meaning

<sup>1</sup> Readers who have not access to Loisy's great Commentary should at all events read Strachan's little book "The Fourth Gospel," published by the Student Christian Movement, which is an interesting and fearless commentary on the Gospel.

of the Cross is newly interpreted as the glorification rather than the voluntary humiliation of Jesus. The teaching of the Gospels is felt to require rearrangement and restatement to meet the needs of a new generation and new circumstances. Above all the theology of the Spirit is seen to have made a great advance. Men are definitely taught to look for further development, under the inspiration of the Spirit of the glorified Word, who has still many things to say as men can bear them, and to trust that Spirit to guide them into all truth.

The mind of the writer of the Fourth Gospel has much in common with the mind of St. Paul, and both of them have the mind of Christ, but there are very important differences between the two disciples of the Master. St. Paul's interests are obviously less theological and more practical, ethical, and missionary.

Yet plainly both are trying to express in the language and thought-forms of their respective days, for their contemporaries, the truth as they have seen it. If they had been less completely men of their own day they would have failed in their attempt and their work would have passed unnoticed. The survival of that work is proof of their successful use of the language and thought of a particular time and place to express eternal truth. But again their success in their own day meant that that eternal truth which they had grasped by faith remained only partially expressed. That which they did in their age others would have to do for later ages. Certainly neither St. Paul, whose vivid thought can be seen moving onwards to fuller and deeper

expression, who counted himself not yet to have apprehended but eagerly reached forward towards the unattained goal, nor St. John, who trusted so completely to the living guidance of the Divine Spirit, would have dreamed that men would have attempted to treat their presentment as the complete and final expression, for all time, of eternal truth.

#### IV

Can we then express in a form suited to our own age the living truth for which the Apostles found one suited to their times? If we are to do so we must try to find in our own circumstances and the best thought of our day our point of contact with the mind of our age. We must recognise that modern knowledge has transformed the whole mental climate of the world. Even those who have no accurate scientific knowledge have become aware that certain ways of expressing religious truth are no longer adequate. For this reason the traditional language of the pulpit has become an almost unknown tongue.

Yet it is, I believe, easier than ever before to express the truth of the Incarnation, just because the very principle of Incarnation, as it is discovered in Jesus, is that in the fulness of human life the invisible God most fully expresses Himself. The religious man, acquainted with modern evolutionary thought, responds



at once to the presentation of Creation not as an act which must have taken place (if it ever took place at a point in time) millions upon millions of years ago, but as a present reality. He cannot believe in a God relegated for all creative purposes to a remote past, or only thought of as intervening at special moments, *e.g.* at the Creation of man, at the time of the historic Incarnation, and so forth. He cannot believe in the merely transcendent God of early Hebrew thought who holds so large a place in the official prayers of the Church. So he is inclined to welcome Mr. Wells with his message of a God who is alive, active, near and friendly, and dismisses the God of the theologian, who is "omni-everything" and is infinitely aloof, as a creation of the mind of man. But I believe that he is prepared for a richer doctrine than any to which Mr. Wells has so far attained. He can hardly help feeling the unsatisfactoriness of a dualism between this friendly God and the Veiled Being, who is somehow greater than God, yet is not God, and probably is not even good. He must see, if he is prepared to think at all, that the line that Mr. Wells draws between man and the rest of nature is purely arbitrary, and indeed is incompatible with scientific knowledge. This nature which Mr. Wells sets over against and in opposition to man, and this Veiled Being who is over against and in opposition to God, are both abstractions. Whatever else is true about him, man is certainly organic to the universe, united on one side of his being with the rest of creation, although in him creation has already reached unattained heights and has before it a prospect of further attainment.

Much more penetrating than Mr. Wells's view is that expressed by Tennyson in his well-known lines :

“ Flower in the crannied wall,  
I pluck you out of the crannies,  
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,  
Little flower—but if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is.”

“ Man the knower is,” as Professor Pringle Pattison rightly insists, “ *within* the real system which he knows,” and again, “ The organism is developed and its powers perfected as an instrument of nature's purpose of self-revelation.” <sup>1</sup>

Creation, then, is to be regarded as the present self-expression of God. It follows that God is wholly present at every stage of creation—wholly present, but only partially revealed, and apart from the revelation in man is not in any true sense revealed at all, since God, who is Spirit, can be revealed only when life has risen to the height of spiritual consciousness. The “ flower in the crannied wall ” would reveal Him wholly to a perfect intelligence, but it cannot reveal Him in any degree except to an intelligence which, although imperfect, attains to some understanding of the world.

The universe, from one point of view, is the Incarnation of God. But this does not mean, as the pantheist falsely imagines, that He is summed up in the universe, or equally revealed in every part of it. Creation is still an unfinished act—“ My Father worketh even until now, and I work.” It is ever old and ever new. Each moment sees a new creative act of God,

<sup>1</sup> Pringle Pattison, *op. cit.*, pp. 122 and 127.

and all true progress means the attainment of a fuller incarnation of the Divine Being than the world has yet seen. God is always more—infinately more—than the universe. The ideals and the religious ideas which we labour and agonise to find means of expressing are our own apprehension of this hitherto unexpressed “beyond” and are the surest evidence of the transcendence of God. Equally true is it that in all creation we can see, as it were, different levels of God’s self-manifestation. Something of Him is to be discovered by the attentive mind everywhere. Even in the most repulsive parasite there is that which may arouse us to admiration and wonder ; there is the profound mystery and the unfulfilled promise of life. But the higher we rise in the scale of being the ampler does the self-manifestation of God become. More and more, not quantitatively but qualitatively, and in us as person communicated to person, does He give of Himself. Not that this divine manifestation advances by a gradual, smooth, uninterrupted progress, as is sometimes thought by those who have a mere smattering of evolutionary knowledge. Everywhere in the world, even among ourselves, we see an upward and a downward movement ; progress and degeneration side by side.

If we accept wholeheartedly the Christian doctrine of God as Love we begin to understand why this is so. But first we have to rid our minds of the old notions of God as being a vast, unlimited Power, external to a world which was created by Him, as it were, by a sudden whim, at a moment in time in the distant past, and was redeemed by Him at another moment in the

less distant past. We have to think of Him as first and last Love, with power which can only be used as Love can use it, and never ceases or has ceased thus to be used.

If creation is the self-expression, the very incarnation of a God who is Love, then God is most fully and clearly revealed where Love and Love's activities are most clearly to be seen. It is true that because of the organic unity of the universe, including man, we may start at any point, and if we carry our investigations far enough, arrive at a notion true as far as it goes of God and man and the universe itself. We may start with the parasite, with the flower in the crannied wall, with primitive man, with ourselves, with the best man we know, and in every case, if we push our investigations far enough, if we take enough pains in our search, we may find evidence of God's presence and of His activity. But plainly, since God must be most fully revealed in the highest we know, we shall do best to seek Him in the highest. That is why Christianity has always told us to seek the Incarnate God, to see Him most fully revealed, most fully present, most fully active in Jesus of Nazareth—who, as we have seen, was first recognised as being utterly human and afterwards came to be recognised as just as utterly divine. If we first study the divine presence in Him, we then turn back with eyes opened and power of vision enhanced to discern God through all the range of life; to see Him ever seeking to incarnate Himself more fully in the growing life of the world.

In Christ, then, we see God revealed in the completest and most perfect self-giving, in and through

the world, to and for the world ; in and through man, to and for man. We see creation as essentially an act of self-limitation which is at the same time the completest possible self-expression of God's own being ; His own love ; His own freedom. Christ Jesus, by telling us to address the Creator as Father and by giving us such a parable as that of the Two Sons to guide our thinking, shows us that in human fatherhood—procreation, *i.e.* creation for God, as it is truly called—we have the best analogy of God's relation to His creatures.

Now human fatherhood is itself at once the expression of love and the expression of self-limitation. To have a son means to create a new being who by his very existence will make continual demands upon his father—a new being who is separate from his father and yet not wholly separate, who is dependent upon his father and yet has a capacity for growing independence. Every human father, when he undertakes the responsibility of fatherhood, runs great risk. What he desires for his son is that he may freely develop his own personal life to its fullest and highest extent. He desires to place himself, his knowledge, his resources as fully as possible at his son's disposal. If he is wise as well as loving, he will always seek to guide, to persuade, to inspire rather than to compel his son to do his will. Indeed I believe that whenever he uses coercive force in his dealings with his son—in the way of punishment for instance—he will, if he knows himself and is in the habit of trying to see things as they are, feel that it is his own failure in love and insight which has made compulsion necessary.

At all events the good earthly father will see love and freedom as correlative. He will seek to draw out in his son the free response of love. But in having a son at all, though he was necessarily expressing himself, he was also necessarily limiting himself, and he was taking and knew that he was taking the risk of bringing into the world one who might ultimately, in spite of all that love could do, turn out a prodigal. Yet his desire and hope are that his son may learn to answer love with love ; that he may grow in capacity for love as he grows in stature ; that more and more he may freely, but actually, share his father's mind, so that, as his life proceeds, the very word " son " may come to have a far fuller and richer meaning than it had when the babe lay first in his arms knowing nothing of parents, of the world, of his own being or his own capacity for growth. And the fulfilment of the ideal in the father's mind is dependent partly upon the completeness of his own loyalty to it—the perfection with which that love continually adapts itself to the growing life of the child, entering with sympathy into the mind of the child at each successive stage of his growth. This on the father's side. On the child's side, no less, there must be a continual response to the father's love. The first merely instinctive feeling for the man with whom he is most familiar must give place to a growing knowledge of his father's mind, a growing realisation of his father's ideals, a growing receptivity which advances at each stage to meet the self-donation of the father. At every stage the perfection of the relationship existing between the father and son depends entirely upon the completeness of the father's self-



giving and upon the growth on the child's part of receptivity and answering self-giving. At every stage, the failure of the son to respond means for the father suffering, great in proportion to his own love and the greatness of the son's failure. But when the son fails, the love of the father will not rest until it has won him back again to the true relationship broken by his sin. If we imagine an ideal relationship, or one that after estrangement has become perfected through the atoning love and mutual suffering of father and son, we see at last the child grown to man's estate his father's closest friend, father and son really sharing a common life and a common mind of which the content has become richer and deeper as the years have passed, till, in spite of those differences of outlook and circumstance which are inevitable in any human relationship, father and son are in a real sense one. The relationship between them is a perfect whole.

Here then we gather, from the teaching of Jesus, truth concerning God and His relation, first to Jesus Himself and afterwards to the men whom He taught to call God Father. It throws a wonderful light upon the meaning of life and upon that eternal purpose and hope of God which St. Paul describes when he says that it was the "good pleasure" of God "to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth."<sup>1</sup>

We see creation as the self-expression, through self-limitation, of the Father. We see how, since Love and Freedom are correlative, throughout the whole of

<sup>1</sup> Ephesians i, 9 and 10, R. V.

creation freedom must run like a silver thread; real freedom which means constant choice of alternatives, power to experiment in this direction or that. We see how the way of life—the pathway to ever fuller and fuller life—must be the way of free, growing response to the self-donation of creative love; how as the creature grows the power of response to the creative love grows with it. We see how at every fresh stage of growth there is a new power in the creature of manifesting the life it shares with the Creator.

All through the scale of life the way of progress is a way of freedom—with all the risk that freedom must mean of failure to respond to love, failure to grow, and even at last, when the creature has learnt the true nature of the Creator, deliberate rejection by that creature of the way of love.

We can see too how because the Creator is Love He can never compel the response He desires to His love. He can only strive to draw it forth by revealing in every condition and circumstance of life His own mind and His desire.

Now all this we learn not merely from Christ's teaching about the Father, but from His own life. The disciples were drawn to Him by the spiritual attractiveness of His love. It is as Love that He manifested His own personality in relation to all men. He freely gave, not merely alms, such as other men gave, but Himself to all who were in need, according to the measure of their need and their capacity for receiving life from Him. He respected utterly and completely every man's freedom. He chose Love's

way of free attraction and refused to follow the way of compulsion in His dealings with men. He would not force men's allegiance by signs. And so men saw in Him the fullest revelation of the living God they had ever seen. He was literally One with God. God was in Him reconciling the world to Himself. There was in Him no barrier set up by self-will to the completeness of God's manifestation of Himself. Yet He was wholly man, and, as we have seen, a man of His own age—gathering up within Himself the life and thought of His own day and manifesting God completely to those who had eyes to see Him in and through the circumstances of a completely human life.

As man He willed what God willed. He saw life as God sees it. He shared God's aims. He acted as God acts. He loved as God loves. He suffered as God suffers, from that rejection of His love which we call sin. Moreover, He revealed the true omnipotence of God—not the omnipotence of arbitrary, unlimited, quasi-physical power, but that "real omnipotence of atoning love, unweariedly creating good out of evil"; which is "no far-off theological mystery but . . . the very texture of our human experience."<sup>1</sup>

It follows from all this that there is a sense in which the Incarnation was complete in Jesus as an historical fact. The life and death of Jesus make one whole revelation of creative love completely active in the world. No further or greater revelation of the nature of God is possible. The Cross of Calvary is the symbol and sacrament of "the cross in the

<sup>1</sup> Pringle Pattison, *op. cit.*, p. 417.

heart of God,"<sup>1</sup> and of the power of Love, by self-giving, to create new good out of the worst possible evil.

But there is a sense in which the Incarnation is not yet complete. It is true that "all things in the heavens and upon the earth are summed up in Christ," but creation is still in progress, and, to combine St. Paul and the writer to the Hebrews, "we see not yet all things subjected to (or summed up in) Him."

Our very business as individual Christians is so to seek, and so to surrender ourselves to, the living God that in our lives Christ may be incarnate anew. As a Church our primary duty is to learn to express ever more and more fully the Divine Spirit of fellowship and love to the world, in all its richness and depth and power.

The Church ought to be continually living in the world as the very sacrament of Christ who is the living God. The Church's true vocation is to do in every place and at every time what Jesus did in Palestine of old. Into the Church all the life and thought of the day ought to find a free entrance, there to be purified and reborn. Then the eternal truth of God could freely fashion for itself forms of expression suited to the mind of every age. And consequently the search for such expression ought to be one of the highest social activities of the Church, instead of being carried on as it is now by a few individuals or little groups of men here and there, often discouraged, feared and even hated.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. "Forgiveness and Suffering," by Dr. Douglas White, pp. 89, 90—a most admirable and suggestive little book.

## V

And now, in view of what has been said, it is necessary that we should consider afresh, and consider if possible without prejudice, the question of the mode of the historic Incarnation.

It is alas ! supremely difficult even now to write with absolute honesty and frankness on this subject, with no desire but to arrive at the truth of the Gospel, because men still have so much less faith in the truth, which, since He who is "love" is also "the truth," is only another aspect of love, than the old writer who believed that it is great enough to prevail in its own power. But at least it is certain that if too many of the ministers of the official Church are unwilling to face the question of the mode of the Incarnation, frankly trusting in the guidance of the Spirit of truth, more and more men and women within and without the Church are thankful to any man who will speak what he honestly believes to be the truth, in love, without prejudice or fear.

If what I have said about God's self-expression is true, two things follow. First, we are not to seek the abnormal but to look upon the normal as the sphere of God's revelation, as Christ Himself so plainly taught : we are not to think of God as habitually absent from the world, or of "Nature" as something set going in a distant past and somehow left to run itself without God, or even in opposition to Him. Still less are we to think of the Divine Nature and Human Nature as

two wholly different and incompatible things. If that were so, no intercommunication, much less any vital personal communion, would be possible between man and God.

The very fact of the Incarnation, if it means anything, means that God Himself believes that only in and as and through man can He fully and completely reveal Himself. Consequently the idea that if our Lord was born in the ordinary way, with a human father as well as a human mother, He would be “only a good man, however great and glorious,” whereas if He was born miraculously, without a human father, it would be more congruous with the belief that “the Son of God came down from Heaven to earth,”<sup>1</sup> can only be advanced by one who is prepared to make various assumptions concerning the nature of God and of man and the relation of God to the world which are hedged about with many kinds of scientific and philosophic difficulty.

It is not too much to say that such an idea receives no warrant at all from the New Testament, whether from our Lord’s own teaching, or from that of St. Paul or St. John.

But it may be maintained—is it not the doctrine still taught in some of our theological colleges?—that human sin made the miraculous birth necessary. The fallen human race needed a new beginning. The entail of inherited sin and guilt had to be broken. This again raises serious difficulties. The old doctrine of the First Adam, the perfect man, who fell from a state of primeval inno-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the Bishop of London’s introduction to “The Virgin Birth of Jesus,” by G. H. Box (Pitman and Sons).



cence is itself incompatible with the modern scientific view of man's origin.<sup>1</sup> The Pauline idea of sin as inherited from Adam is also full of difficulty. But more full of difficulty than either is the idea that the inherited taint is broken by a miraculous birth which retains the human mother but dispenses with the human father. Are we to believe that the taint descends only in the male line? If not, then it is certainly present in the child born of a human mother. The Church of Rome has felt that difficulty and has invented the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin to meet it. But if an Immaculate Conception was possible in the case of the Virgin, who had a human father as well as a human mother, it was equally possible in the case of our Lord, even though Joseph and Mary were both "His parents" in the natural sense of the words.<sup>2</sup>

But, it may be said, "the Church has always believed in the Virgin Birth. It is plainly stated as a fact in the Church's formularies. Therefore you are bound to accept it." But obviously the question is not settled by the mere fact that a statement of the Virgin Birth is embodied in the Creed, since it is not only legitimate but necessary to ask what was the object in view in the minds of those men of another age who incorporated the doctrine in the Creed.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Essay III., p. 82, *supra*.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke ii, 43; cf. also 48, "Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing."

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Coleridge, quoted by A. V. G. Allen, "Freedom in the Church" (Macmillan & Co.), p. 101. "The truth of a Creed must be tried by the Holy Scripture; but the sense of the Creed by the known sentiments and inferred intentions of its compilers." Our own

It is agreed by competent theologians (as we have seen) that the real object of the Creeds was less to attempt to define the faith—a thing obviously impossible in a few sentences—than to rule out certain definite errors.

But there is very good evidence for the belief that the clauses concerning our Lord's birth in the old Creed were not inserted, as is usually thought,—and as such a statement as that quoted above from the Bishop of London would imply—in order to emphasise the claim that He was divine. On the contrary, the real difficulty which the Church had to meet at the time was the Docetic heresy, the teaching that Christ had not a real human body, was not really born and did not really die as a man. It was the doctrine of the fulness of our Lord's humanity, not of His divinity, that the clauses in question were intended to defend.<sup>1</sup> The difficulty to be met was, in fact, the

Article viii expressly bases the authority of the Creeds upon, and makes them secondary to, Scripture, thus any new considerations arising from the critical study of Scripture must necessarily be taken into account in the interpretation of the Creeds.

<sup>1</sup> "The words *ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου* were wanting in the original text (of the old Roman Creed). The phrase *ἐκ Μαρίας τῆς παρθένου* of course carried with it by implication the uniqueness and miraculousness of Christ's birth, in which the author certainly believed, but it is clear that he was interested not in the miraculousness but in the reality of the birth, as Ignatius also was (*cf. e.g. Smyrn. I*). If it had been its miraculous character that interested him, if it had been the divineness of Christ's origin that he was concerned to emphasise, he could not have contented himself with the simple phrase quoted above. If the words *ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου* constituted a part of the original text there might be some ground for thinking the author wished to emphasise Christ's divine origin, though even then we could not be sure of it; but in the absence of those words, it is impossible to think so. He evidently wished to assert that

exact opposite of that which the modern man is likely to feel. And to the modern man the defence adopted makes the belief in the fulness of our Lord's humanity more difficult instead of more certain.

And when we turn from the Creeds to Scripture we are faced with greater difficulties still.<sup>1</sup> First, it is clear beyond any possibility of doubt that our Lord never based any claim upon the ground of His own miraculous birth. He never once referred to it. When on one occasion a woman in the crowd cried out "Blessed is the womb that bare thee and the paps

Christ was actually born—a fact which was denied by Marcion, who held that He came down suddenly from Heaven a full-grown man—and that His earthly life was therefore a reality, which Marcion also denied. . . .

"The article therefore as it stands in the original text, with the emphasis on the reality of Christ's birth, cannot be satisfactorily explained except as a protest against Docetism, and more particularly the docetism of Marcion. And so anyone who believed that Christ was really born, even though he did not believe that Christ was born of a Virgin, was in accord with the spirit of the article, though not with its form.

"The Virgin Birth was widely, though not universally, believed at the time (the Creed) was composed. It is not referred to by any of the Apostolic Fathers except Ignatius, who speaks of it twice. It is clear that it was a common belief in Justin's day; but there were still Christians that did not accept it, as appears from Dial. 48." A. C. McGiffert, *The Apostles' Creed*, pp. 122-127.

<sup>1</sup> It is quite obvious that in an Essay of this kind one can only deal in summary fashion with the arguments on one side or another. Those who want to read in detail what is said on both sides of the controversy here touched upon should read such easily accessible books as "Miracles in the New Testament," by A. C. Headlam, D.D., or "The Virgin Birth of Jesus," by G. H. Box (Pitman and Sons), on the orthodox side, and "The Faith of a Modern Churchman," by Canon Glazebrook (Murray), who writes, moderately and persuasively, in favour of a position very similar to that maintained in the present Essay.

which thou didst suck," instead of publicly welcoming this eulogy of His mother, He replied characteristically, "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." From first to last He based all His claims upon the spiritual values of His teaching and His work. He assumed that those who had faith in God would recognise the truth of His Gospel. He Himself, as we have seen already, always laid stress not upon the abnormal but upon the normal as the medium of revelation for God. Indeed, this was the chief of many contrasts between Him and the religious teachers and the populace of His own day. And those disciples who shared His mind followed, at least in this respect, in His footsteps. Never once, as far as we know, was the Virgin Birth mentioned by any one of the earliest preachers of the Gospel. St. Paul never alluded to the doctrine in his Sermons or his Epistles, and apparently had never heard it.<sup>1</sup> St. Mark never mentions the doctrine, and indeed it seems certain that in his view it was at the Baptism that Jesus of Nazareth was made the Christ by the anointing with the Holy Spirit. With St. Mark the phrase

<sup>1</sup> It is sometimes said that in the phrase *γενομένον ἐκ γυναικός* ("born of a woman"), Gal. iv, 4, St. Paul is asserting the Virgin Birth, but what St. Paul is asserting is merely the fact that the Son of God was born as a man. The word *γυνή* is the word he uses for "wife" as opposed to *παρθένος*, a "virgin;" cf. I Cor. vii, 34. Again, it is sometimes said that St. Paul's doctrine of the Second Adam would have had no validity unless the Christ had been Virgin-born. There is not one scrap of evidence for this assertion. The whole of St. Paul's doctrine is indeed based upon the Resurrection, by which (and not by the Virgin Birth) Jesus Christ, "born of the seed of David according to the flesh, was declared (or determined) to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness." Rom. i; 3-4.

“ the Son of God ” is the technical term for the Messiah and has not attained to that fulness of meaning which it afterwards came to hold in the Church. So, again, St. Peter—who surely must have known of the Virgin Birth if any Apostle knew of it—speaks, as St. Paul speaks, of our Lord as being a direct descendant of David (Acts ii, 30). But, perhaps most strange of all to one who has never seriously considered the Scriptural evidence for the Virgin Birth, and has often heard the confident assertion of the pulpits that the central doctrine of the Incarnation is bound up with the acceptance of the Virgin Birth as an historical fact, is the evidence of the Fourth Gospel upon this question. It is in that Gospel which gives us the classic definition of the Incarnation—“ The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth ”—that one would naturally have expected to find the clearest teaching concerning the Virgin Birth, if that teaching was essential to faith in the Incarnation. But what, in fact, do we find ? Not only does the Evangelist never allude to the doctrine anywhere ; but in a passage in which it would have been most natural to speak of it he makes no mention of it at all. He alludes, in the seventh chapter, to two separate traditions concerning the origin of the Messiah. First (in verse 27), to a tradition that the Christ was to appear suddenly, no one knowing whence He came, and, secondly (in verse 42), to the tradition that He would come, not out of Galilee, whence Jesus came, but “ of the seed of David, and from Bethlehem the

village where David was." He disregards both traditions, and to anyone who carefully considers the whole passage and indeed the whole doctrine of the Gospel his reason is obvious. For him the Sonship of Jesus has no connection whatever with His physical or local origin. He has been from all eternity the Son of God, and those who have faith will recognise that truth by spiritual intuition. Indeed, if the Evangelist holds any tradition concerning the moment in time when the Word became flesh, it would seem, from the emphasis which he lays upon the testimony of St. John the Baptist, recorded in his first chapter (verse 33)—"Upon Whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Spirit"—that he upholds the testimony of St. Mark as against the other tradition, which is found nowhere in the New Testament except in the narratives in the first chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke.

There remain, then, these Gospels to be considered. And with their consideration new difficulties arise, so many indeed that it would require a book rather than an Essay to discuss them. And here it may be noted that even defenders of the orthodox tradition agree that, as Canon Box says, "A cursory examination of the Gospel narratives is sufficient to reveal certain apparent inconsistencies of statement and implication regarding the parentage of Jesus. He is popularly regarded and spoken of as the Son of Joseph (*cf.* Matt. xiii, 55 : "Is not this the carpenter's son ?"; Luke iv, 23 ; John i, 45 ; vi, 42), and even in the Nativity narrative of the third Gospel Mary and



Joseph are several times referred to as "his parents" (Luke ii, 27, 41, 43), while once the mother of Jesus herself is made to say "Thy father (*i.e.* Joseph) and I sought thee sorrowing" (ii, 48)." The same writer goes on to point out that the Virgin Birth "apparently formed no part of the early Apostolic preaching."<sup>1</sup>

Canon Box indeed holds that this was due to the fact that "the secret of Jesus's birth may have been for long jealously guarded within the narrow circle of persons among whom it was originally known." But this, in turn, at once provokes the obvious question, "If the fact was so essential to a true faith in the Incarnation, how came it about that it was so jealously guarded?" It is answered that it had to be so guarded out of regard for the feelings of the Blessed Virgin. But surely this cannot be so, unless there was something derogatory to the honour of the Blessed Virgin in the general knowledge of the fact.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. G. H. Box, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>2</sup> Most modern men and women would surely endorse the following words of Miss Maude Royden, who in a letter in *The Challenge*, February 22nd, 1918, writes:—

"If the Virgin Birth is a fact, it is one of very great importance. The least theological of us can see that. . . . It is also clear that the years immediately following the Crucifixion and Resurrection of our Lord were crucial ones. Christianity was being preached far and wide, traditions were being created, beliefs crystallised. Yet we are assured that during these all-important years, the only person who knew of the Virgin Birth suppressed all mention of it, permitted Christianity to be preached without it (as Dr. Sanday would do), and only when she 'felt her own death approaching' spoke of it 'in private, perhaps to a single person'—thus ensuring the greatest possible degree of doubt upon a matter of fundamental importance. All this we are assured was 'most natural.'

"To me and to all women with whom I have discussed it, it seems so unnatural as to be frankly impossible. The absence of

It is clear from the study of the Gospels according to St. Matthew and St. Luke that even those Gospels represent not one single tradition but two. All scholars are agreed that the early chapters of St. Luke come from another source than the rest of the Gospel. No doubt "in its present form," as Dr. Percy Gardner says, "the narrative does assert the Virgin Birth, but some able critics have held that the important verses i, 34 and 35 are an interpolation and that the original narrative did not assert a miraculous birth."<sup>1</sup> Whether this be so or not, no amount of ingenuity can reconcile the early narratives of St. Matthew and St. Luke. For instance, the latter's story of the return to Nazareth after the Presentation in the Temple is quite inconsistent with St. Matthew's account of the visit of the Wise Men, the murder of the innocents, and the flight into Egypt. The genealogies, too, obviously represent the tradition—which, as we have seen, St. Peter held and St. Paul taught—that Jesus was a direct descendant through Joseph from David, Abraham, and, as St. Luke would teach, from Adam and so from God.

The whole chain of the Lucan genealogy is broken by the insertion at the last link of the words "as was supposed," a fact which at once arouses the suspicion

all mention of the Virgin Birth before the death of Our Lady must be explained in some other way. No woman of character would have behaved in a manner so reckless, so selfish, and so regardless of great issues—least of all Our Lady, who had already, on this hypothesis, faced and disregarded the imputation of unchastity. I do not attempt to intervene where theologians must decide, but do let us, in the interests of common sense, realise that there are limits to the absurdities into which 'feminine delicacy' can lead even the most foolish of women—let alone the best."

<sup>1</sup> Article in *The Modern Churchman*, May, 1914.

in any candid mind that those words are a later addition to the original genealogy. And in regard to St. Matthew i, 16, there are various readings of this crucial verse upon which the whole genealogy depends, and there is good reason to suppose that the original reading was the plain statement that Joseph begat Jesus.<sup>1</sup> There remains therefore no clear and indisputable Scriptural witness to the historicity of the Virgin Birth but the passage in St. Matthew i, 18-25. It is generally agreed that this Gospel was not written until about seventy years after the birth of Jesus. The other Scriptures record, as we have seen, various traditions in regard to our Lord's earthly origin. As to the way in which the story came into being if it was not an historical fact, no one who has the slightest imagination or any knowledge of the way in which literal-minded persons translate spiritual truth into mythology, or, even to-day, take ancient Scripture prophecy as the literal forecast of future events, can fail to see how easily the doctrine that Jesus was the Son of God would have seemed to such persons a statement of a quasi-physical paternity on the part of God, and how they would have seized upon such a passage as Isaiah vii, 14, and, interpreting it in a literal sense (which it never bore in the original, wherein, as every scholar agrees, no Virgin Birth is asserted), would have looked for its equally literal fulfilment. Again it is easy to see how, amid the eager discussions of the peoples of the East, a popular expectation would have ere long created a popular legend, that which

<sup>1</sup> For a full discussion of this genealogy, *cf.* Box, *op. cit.*, pp. 12 ff. and 215 ff.

was told by one as fancy being repeated by another as fact.

Surely, then, we must agree with Professor Percy Gardner when he writes: "It is clear that for the historicity of the Virgin-birth no evidence exists which, if found in Herodotus or Tacitus, any person would consider of any value. If the question were referred to any body of historic teachers, say those of Oxford or of Cambridge, they could give no other answer than: *Not proven*. To expect them to look on a narrative in a Gospel in another way is to ask them to give up all their usual canons and all their tests, and to introduce fresh ones only. A conscience and a sense of responsibility belong as much to historical as to theological teachers." The situation in regard to the mode of the Incarnation may then be briefly summed up as follows. First, there is no necessary connection between the Incarnation and a Virgin Birth. It is quite possible to hold that Jesus Christ was and is God incarnate—that St. Paul's words, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself," and St. John's statement that "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," express the actual truth without accepting as literal history the birth-narratives as they now stand in the first and third Gospels. Further, it is plain that our Lord Himself never asked of anyone who came to Him belief in His miraculous birth. He deliberately, over and over again, based true faith on spiritual grounds and discouraged the association of belief in God with abnormality. Further, when the evidence for the alleged Virgin Birth is examined it is found to be conflicting, capable of bearing exactly

opposite interpretations, and among scholars best qualified to judge of these matters there is found to be no agreement except that every scholar, orthodox or unorthodox, would say that on historical grounds, taken alone, the evidence for the Virgin Birth is unconvincing. Even so uncompromising an upholder of the literal historicity of the Virgin Birth as Dr. Gore, though he believes that, to quote his own words, "the historical evidence for our Lord's birth of a Virgin is in itself strong and cogent," goes on to add, "But it is not such as to compel belief. There are ways to dissolve its force. . . . To clinch the historical evidence for our Lord's Virgin birth there is needed the sense that, being what He was, His human birth could hardly have been otherwise than is implied in the Virginity of His mother."<sup>1</sup>

It is precisely this sense of the necessity of the Virgin Birth on other grounds that we have found only in those who hold a doctrine of God and man which the best modern thought finds impossible to be entertained.

Are we then, it will be asked, to cut these clauses out of our Creed, and the beautiful Christmas stories out of our Bibles? Are we, as it is sometimes put, to throw overboard the faith held by millions of Christians of past ages and the accepted faith of millions to-day?

To that I would answer that I and those who agree with me have no desire to cut the clauses out of the Creed. We have no hesitation in repeating them,

<sup>1</sup> Gore, "Dissertations on Subjects connected with the Incarnation," p. 64.

because we are honestly convinced that we have a firm hold upon the truth which they were intended to guard.

We do not wish anyone who believes that the historicity of the Virgin Birth is essential to faith in the Incarnation to give up that belief ; we only ask them to allow others who do not agree with them as to the necessity of that belief to remain fellow-worshippers with them in the Church. These others differ from the Bishop of Oxford only in drawing a line between the historical and symbolical elements in the Creed in a different place.

So, again, with the Scripture narratives. We should no more desire to see them omitted from the New Testament than we should desire to see the Creation chapters omitted from the Old. We recognise to the full their beauty. We, no less than others, can find in them deep spiritual truth. The Catholic use of the Stations of the Cross shows how possible and how fruitful it is to use legend to the highest spiritual ends, and the devout modernist can meditate upon the "Joyful Mysteries" side by side with the devout traditionalist. Indeed, who could say from reading such a book as "The Spiral Way," by John Cordelier,<sup>1</sup> to which school of thought its author belonged ? For my part, I should use wholeheartedly the following words :

"The vast majority of Christians accept the story of the birth of Jesus as a fact of history. Some regard it rather as a symbol of a great truth. To all Christians alike the Virgin Mother is one of

<sup>1</sup> Published by John Watkins.



the noblest and most adorable symbols in the whole world.

“What does the Virgin Birth mean mystically and spiritually? ‘Virginity,’ says Dr. Du Bose,<sup>1</sup> ‘represents the fact of an impotency whose potency must come from without itself.’ The Virgin Mother represents mankind’s utmost desire and longing and faith, in itself incapable of bearing fruit, but ready and capable to the very utmost of being the instrument of God’s energy and love. This Virgin humanity stands waiting and expectant, asking for the Kingdom of God. And the Kingdom comes from the very womb of humanity itself; it clothes itself with human flesh, and shows itself as Son of Man. It comes not as the product of Man’s self-sufficiency, but from his complete acknowledgment of his insufficiency and his trustful dependence upon God.”<sup>2</sup>

And if it be true that the vast majority of Christian people accept the Birth-narratives literally, is that not equally true of every other part of the Bible? Certainly it was true of the Creation chapters less than a century ago that not merely the illiterate but the learned treated them just as literally, and there was precisely the same outcry against their treatment as symbolism as is now aroused in the case of the Birth-narratives. But though the majority of Christians have hitherto entirely failed to discriminate between spiritual truth and the vehicle by means of which it has been transmitted, their failure so to discriminate in

<sup>1</sup> “Soteriology,” p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> H. Anson, Leaflet, “The Incarnation and Prayer,” published by *The Challenge*.

the past is having disastrous consequences to-day. In the first place, the old belief in verbal inspiration is everywhere dying, if not dead, and men are inevitably beginning to welcome a rational treatment of Scripture. In the second place, slowly but surely the idea of the uniformity of nature—which to a Christian is only another way of expressing the constancy of God—is filtering down through level after level of education. And as a natural result miracles taken for granted a generation ago are more and more questioned to-day. I think it would surprise and shock many strictly orthodox priests to know, as I know, how many of the younger teachers in their own Church schools are feeling the difficulty of teaching the story of the Virgin Birth as literal history. There is such a thing as a change, not sufficiently taken into account, in the intellectual and spiritual climate, from generation to generation. This indeed affects not only the teachers but the children themselves. Traditional views are often defended in the supposed interests of the humble poor. More and more clearly I am learning that the humble poor are perfectly untroubled by, and often most gladly welcome, frankly modernist teaching. The common people hear the living Lord gladly—when He comes as He came of old speaking in the language of their own day. Those who use the freedom of thought wherewith Christ has made us free find everywhere an eager response to their message. Men were never so ready to receive the Gospel of the living God, their Creator, their Redeemer, and their own true life: a God who is never erratic. They are quite willing to join in a genuine search for truth, and to believe

that if there are debated questions to which at present they can find no sure answer, the truest religion may manifest itself in patient and trustful waiting for further light.

## VI

I end this Essay as I began, with the witness of experience. The faith I have come to hold is one to which I have only come—I freely admit it—through seeming loss. It has come to me as a life out of death. It is a faith against which I myself have fought in past years with the same fierce but mistaken loyalty with which I see many fighting against it to-day. I knew not what I did. It is a deeper and more living faith than I knew of old, and it holds within itself the promise of a continual progress, if only by God's grace I have the courage to follow, at the cost of the Cross, the Master who, in spite of my sins and weakness, has called me to preach and teach in His Name out of my own experience of His Love. It is a faith, which I humbly believe to be unshakable, in the living, immanent Spirit of Christ who is one with, and is the revelation of, the transcendent Father; the Christ who is wholly and completely God and is still to be found, by those whose eyes and ears He has opened, incarnate in the world. The attempt to follow where His Spirit leads, to accept His values, and to work for the embodiment of His Kingdom in a world-wide Sacrament of fellowship has made life a glowing adventure and at one and the same time both an agony of painful growth and an experience of an ever profounder joy. Everywhere,

as I seek to trust more completely the guidance of His Spirit, I am learning more and more to recognise His unfailing presence in the world which is ever being created through and redeemed by His Love, and chiefly, among the sons of men with whom is His delight. Most plainly has He revealed Himself to me in the hours of my own darkest personal sorrow, in the midst of the weariness of constant work, or in the sudden illumination which has succeeded some eager but painful struggle of the mind to grasp new aspects of truth.

Surely, most surely, He has revealed Himself sometimes amidst and by means of the slow processes of Nature, sometimes in the sudden apocalypse which seems most consonant with times of catastrophic change such as those in which we live. I have learnt to see that no life is too lowly for His self-giving humility to reach, and that something of His self-manifestation is to be discovered, by those who earnestly seek Him, in every level of the many-graded life of the world. The flowers of the field, the birds of the air, the little children and humble men and women, in every common human circumstance and occupation, reveal something of His beauty and His love. Most startlingly have I seen His presence revealed where human bodies lie tormented in agony, and where human hearts are well-nigh breaking beneath an overwhelming load of sorrow. I think again and again of my own wounded soldiers in hospital and of those triumphant souls among the poor folk in my Parish who, in their patient endurance, have become for me the truest Sacrament of His divine presence.

Surely now, if ever at any time in the whole history

of this beautiful and terrible world, its living God and Saviour is visibly revealed in the midst of us. Deeply to be pitied are those who cannot see Him and those who would deny His presence where He does not, because He cannot, confine Himself within the narrow limits of their intellectual schemes.

Even now beyond the darkness I see a great dawn breaking, and the Incarnation of the Son of God becomes at last a vision of the Commonwealth of God. For that Commonwealth everywhere men seem to me to be longing, some of them groping blindly and others marching forward with open eyes. And nothing—absolutely nothing—hinders the coming of the new day but the wilfulness of men's ignorance and their stubborn refusal to make the self-surrender of a living faith in answer to the appeal of Incarnate Love.





V

ATONEMENT

By W. SCOTT PALMER



## SYNOPSIS

### ATONEMENT.

Here taken as affecting all men in all time. Its outcome and purpose are the uniting of men with each other and with God. It is the manifestation of redeeming love.

### BELIEF AND DOCTRINES.

Belief in atonement is general, but no doctrine of it has secured general consent. The Christian, however, should inquire into the meaning it has for him, that he may be able to give a reason for his faith.

### THE CHRISTIAN WITNESS.

There is a divine kingdom, the fulfilment of men. But there are men who reject or fail to discover it, are culpably or innocently ignorant of it, and thus present an obstacle to the communicating grace of God.

Christ Jesus is one with the eternal Christ who has always striven to reconcile men with God and bring them into the fulness of the Kingdom.

There is at the heart of all natural life a spiritual priesthood of reconciliation that is His and is shared by all men reconciled in Him.

This both does away with the artifice of a legalist or mechanical priesthood and discredits any use of lower analogues of the divine work. Our own priesthood among our fellows and our highest

spiritual needs bear true witness to the purpose of God and His work in giving Himself, to us, for us, and in us, as this is fully revealed and carried out in Jesus Christ.

Atonement is an appeasing of wrath not in God but in men ; and this wrath, if unappeased, brings men to "the second death," wherein they perish for lack of God and His sustaining communicated life.

#### THE ATONEMENT OF JESUS CHRIST.

This is self-giving to the utmost. The atoning and reconciling work of the one eternal Christ of God incarnate has been partially and obscurely shown through all ages, but in the life and death of Christ Jesus it is consummated and is made known among men with surpassing clearness and surpassing power.

## ATONEMENT

FOR the writer of this Essay atonement is an action and a process which affects all men from the beginning until now. The outcome and the purpose of atonement is the unifying of men with God in fellowship and by love—a City of God, a harmony of the Sons of God. Its final result is the completion of that divine symphonic ode wherein the Poet of the universe communicates Himself in music to the souls of men. But the Poet's Word is fully uttered only through an agony of redeeming love. There are elements which, before they are gathered into that living symphony, must be rescued from the dumb ineffectiveness of ignorance and the jarring discords of sin. They are not passive elements ; they must be drawn, not forced, into harmony. They must be attracted to the City of God ; because they are sons of God who must in His music live their own lives. They are able to stay outside the City ; they are able to refuse to have their share in the harmonies of God. Atonement means, then, for this present writer, the action and process by which their reluctance and their refusal are overcome—if they are overcome—and a way is opened for God's grace.

The many formal doctrines of atonement are so many attempts to state this sublime work in common language and in fashions learnt in cities other than that of God. They are attempts to make clear to the intellect an action and a process which are essentially of spirit and life. We have paid very dearly for such falsifying clarity as has been reached. Our own minds have often deceived our minds ; the instruments we have used have turned against us. The earthen vessel itself has come to stand for a treasure it was in truth never able to contain.

The wisdom of the Church, a wisdom countervailing many errors of churchmen, has so ordered this matter that while belief in atonement is common to all Christians, no one of the many attempts to state or explain it and the experience which is its ground, in terms of a transaction among men, has received general support and thus acquired the value of a corporate consent. There is no authoritative doctrine of atonement that has to be kept in the foreground of thought and given due weight as embodying a consensus of real experience. None of the intellectual nets in which different men have sought to catch and hold for intellectual survey this living work has been accorded a sanction binding on our respect. There are certain advantages for us, then, in the conduct of our inquiry. We have a singularly free opportunity ; we have indeed one of which it is not only the right but the duty of every thoughtful Christian to make use, if he can, that he may be able to give a reason for the faith that is in him.

It is not too much to say that no one among the



elaborate and sometimes daring attempts made by the doctors of old to state the spiritual marvel of atonement, indeed to explain it, will stand nowadays for our reason. Yet we need not begin afresh. Behind all the schemes devised by the wit and learning of doctors there stand the saints and the prophets, the Gospel of Christ, the long history and the continuous witness, willing and unwilling, of mankind. We have only to seek, as at a fountain-head, the living witness in the lives of men. From this witness we may come to know, as they know who by sympathetic touch approach life within, what this wonder really is and means.

What then, let us ask first, is the Christian witness concerning man's need for atonement?

There is, the Christian says, a divine kingdom, a true commonwealth. Where other men speak of a dear City of Cecrops he speaks, but with a larger and deeper context than the Stoic, very naturally and adoringly of the City of God. It is his home and his fulfilment—the goal of his spirit's longing, the place where truth and beauty and holiness, those objects of his passionate search, are seen in one. It is the kingdom of which Jesus spoke, for which He lived and died and continually lives, the kingdom that as a germ is within a man, but in full expansion will embrace him. It is the home and fulfilment of all men; it is their City as it is His.

Of this divine home, this established union and communion, God is light and life. In Him and in fellowship with Him all men find the passion of their spirit for ever growing, and for ever supplied with the

enrichment by which it grows. He is their peace because in Him all diverse elements are made at one. He is their light and life—one light, one life they share.

But the Christian will tell you that the glory of the light and life of God, given to all men, sometimes becomes in a strange and terrible manner a barrier against them. It becomes like the flaming sword before the gates of Paradise. And this is very strange. If you remember that the nature of life and light, even in the illumination of human reason and in the lives of all men, is to radiate, to stretch out everywhere, to gather up, it certainly is strange that God should become in any way a barrier about His City. Yet when you come to reflect upon the matter you cannot but see that there are men for whom divine light and life are repelling even when shown only in our human degree here on earth and in everyday affairs. What are these men? Why are they repelled by that which is their one fulfilment?

Many of us may be able, out of our own experience, to answer both questions. But not every man's experience has in this regard one and the same character. Some will give one kind of answer, some another. We may, for example, be able to say that we ourselves were at one time repelled by the things of God, and that it was because we did not know what His life and light really are. Doubtless this is true, if we were repelled. It is true of any man. Of a certainty no man could see any divine fact or truth as it really is, and turn away. But we must ask ourselves why we did not see, why we did not know. Then we may have to acknowledge that we were to blame for our

own ignorance. We did not want to see, we did not want to know, and we were aware that there was something to be seen and known. We were interested in things more congenial to us, and we focussed our attention—the eye of our mind—and concentrated our effort—the effective strength of our will—on those things. Therefore we were and remained ignorant, but culpably ignorant, of the things of God. This ignorance is very easily attained ; it is indeed difficult to avoid. It is no less than the broad way that leads to destruction, and if we follow it to its end we are destroyed. Because we choose to remain ignorant of spiritual light and life, and therefore will not receive them into ourselves, the eyes of our soul atrophy for lack of use, and our life shrinks, dwindles—perhaps dies away. That is the dreadful doom, maybe, of the man who persistently chooses to be repelled by God, who contemns holiness, beauty, truth, as these are displayed before his eyes, who will not listen to the voice of conscience or of reason, and shapes his character to the pattern of his self-seeking.

Still there is an ignorance not self-chosen, and this, not the other, may be ours. It is an ignorance real from the beginning, not at first assumed and then perhaps growing to the awful reality of death. And if none other than this ignorance is ours, then truly it is in no degree our fault that we have never caught a glimpse of the radiance of the divine City ; we know not so much as whether there be any divine City. Our ignorance has been and is unwilling, unchosen. And in the darkness, all the while, we have surely been feeling after God, responding to His touch, and only

waiting for the authentic sign of His coming, perhaps for the hand of a brother to lead us openly to Him, the voice of a brother to tell us that it is indeed He who is with us. We are aliens from the commonwealth, but not as those others. We are such aliens as need only to know that there is a commonwealth to become its members, enfranchised citizens of the City of God that is to come. We are standing without, but not by our own will; we are only awaiting the Good News, the manifestation of our peace. Not yet are we gathered in with the rest of the sons of God and being made one with them and with Him, but at the first sound of the trumpet that goes before Him we shall arise and take our own place.

This ignorance is divided by the gulf between heaven and hell from that which is self-chosen; though the two may co-exist in vacillating, unstable, half-hearted men such as most of us are, compact of the elements of heaven and hell together. Plainly, if atonement means what it is taken to mean in this Essay the summons to assembly of the peoples in God, if it is to be heard and answered, must be such as to meet the troubles of both innocent and culpable ignorance. Atonement, that action and process in which God and man work together for salvation, must supply the needs of all; of those who look for its Good News and of those whose eyes and hearts are intent elsewhere. The sheep who have no shepherd, and those who flee from before His face, alike are destined to come in, and will, if love can bring them in.

Let us consider further the witness of the Christian in this regard. Let us consider, above all, his witness

to Christ the great shepherd of all sheep, and to Christ's part in our atonement.

The mind of the Christian, if it is not spoilt by some attempt to formulate the mystery of atonement and crystallise living reality, will gladly express itself in declaring that Christ Jesus is in very truth "one with the Christ who manifested Himself however obscurely in the ancient days,"<sup>1</sup> and that the atoning work of Christ is one in which every man may and should have his share. From the beginning of the world God in man—the eternal Christ—has striven for the union of men with each other and with Him, and His love from the beginning has been their atonement and salvation, working with men and in and through them.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews the atoning priesthood of Jesus is said to be "after the order of Melchizedek," after a spiritual and sacramental, that is, a natural order; not one that is mechanical or legal, like the priesthood of Levi—at best only a suggestion of the real and actual priesthood of life. "From the beginning of the world the whole priestly instinct of life has been striving towards its perfect manifestation, throwing out partial manifestations, but less and less imperfect, as it moved onward."<sup>2</sup> Professor Nairne says that the author of the Epistle "has a magnificent plan. He finds a deep spiritual idea of priesthood, of bringing Godward, to be at the heart of all natural life from the beginning of the world, and he marshals his Lord's earthly life on those ascending lines which

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Nairne, "The Epistle of Priesthood," p. 33 (T. and T. Clark).

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Nairne, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

run up into the will of God. Here is indeed," Professor Nairne continues, "the sacrament of sacraments. In it the visible and the eternal are really one. They seem two, because the unity is effected by life, growing, suffering, loving life, which on its earthly side seems to come to an end. But no one can contemplate this life without perceiving whither it tends, and no one (this is of the essence of the sacrament) can share this life without passing onward with it. . . . [In the Epistle] there is a perfectly frank recognition of the real manhood of the Lord. His life and work are real history handed down from Himself through those who heard Him to the author and his friends. 'Jesus,' the private personal name by which this particular man was known on earth, is the name regularly used in the Epistle. He has a more famous name, 'Christ,' but it too is human, and has been borne by others before Him, and He has received it by inheritance from them."<sup>1</sup>

The author of the Epistle does not regard the Levitical priesthood as either a symbol or a sacrament. It only "provides an analogy." The priesthood of Christ "has nothing in common with the Levitical. The Levitical could never develop into His priesthood. What likeness it has to His is merely artificial."

There, in this supremely important matter, we have the enduring, but seldom sufficiently recognised, difference between the devices of men and the realities of nature. And every theoretic device by which men have sought to explain or state the living, natural fact of atonement has been worked out as the scientific man works out a mechanical representation of this

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 67-68.



beautiful and significant world, but with far less careful reference to what really is and happens. Every one of those theoretic devices is due to an effort to describe in terms of human law, human commerce, exchanges, bargains, contracts, treaties, or transactions of some such kind, what is in fact vital movement and vital change in personal lives, which not only endure in and for themselves but in spiritual power interpenetrate one another. And whereas the mechanical descriptions of physical science, because they have been closely applied to and continually tested by physical reality, are well borne by the physical world, no one of the schemes of atonement even touches the spiritual and sacramental reality of the uniting of human souls in and with God by the sacrificial priesthood of life. They have never been adjusted to life—no schemes ever can be so adjusted to life—as the laws and concepts of the physicist are adjusted to the physical world. Like that theory of transubstantiation which overthrows the nature of a sacrament by describing and explaining it in terms of a (now outworn) philosophic scheme, they are fundamentally false. Of some such theory of atonement, put forth by a writer who accused Christians of holding it, William Law wrote in “The Spirit of Love”: “What an Arrow is here, I will not say, shot beside the Mark, but shot at nothing ! Because nothing of that, which he accuses, is to be found in our Redemption. The God of Christians is so far from being, as he says, *implacable* and revengeful, . . . that the whole Form and Manner of our Redemption comes wholly from the free, antecedent, infinite Love and Goodness of God towards

fallen Man. That the *innocent Christ* did not suffer, to quiet an angry Deity, but merely as *co-operating, assisting, and uniting* with that Love of God, which desired our Salvation. That He did not suffer in *our Place or Stead*, but only *on our Account*, which is quite a different matter. And to say that He suffered in *our Place or Stead*, is as absurd, as contrary to Scripture, as to say, that He rose from the Dead, and ascended into Heaven in *our Place and Stead*, that we might be excused from it. For His Sufferings, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension are all of them equally on *our Account*, for our Sake, for our Good and Benefit, but none of them possible to be in our Stead. And as Scripture and Truth affirm, that He ascended into Heaven *for us*, though neither Scripture nor Truth will allow it to be in *our Place and Stead*, so for the same Reasons, it is strictly true, that He suffered, and died *for us*, though no more in our *Place or Stead*, nor any more desirable to be so than His Ascension into Heaven for us should be in *our Place and Stead*.” “The whole Truth therefore of the Matter is plainly this, Christ given *for us*, is neither more nor less than Christ given *into us*. And He is in no other Sense, our full, perfect, and sufficient Atonement, than as His Nature and Spirit are born, and formed in us, which so purge us from our Sins, that we are thereby in Him, and by Him dwelling in us, become new Creatures, having our Conversation in Heaven.”

“Nature and Spirit”—it is the recognition of these as at once the instruments whereby and the field wherein Christ works that compels us to carry atonement beyond a religion in name not yet two thousand years

old, and a body of men who call themselves, or have ever called themselves, Christians. We must carry it into the wide world of peoples through all their ascending generations, and even into the ground of infra-human nature from which they sprang, which is embraced within their nature and thus indwelt by spirit.

“ ‘ I am the Victim meet  
Set up in every forest Calvary ;  
Mine is the torment of the city street,  
And mine the restless sorrow of the sea.

“ ‘ Yea ! not alone  
In the sharp throes of man’s self-conscious grief  
I for the error of my world atone ;  
Each falling leaf

“ ‘ That dying gives its virtue to the sod,  
The anguish of each mother-bird bereaved,  
The patient dying beast—lo ! here is God,  
In these my holy spirit is conceived.’ ”<sup>1</sup>

How, if the artifice of science cannot lay hold on the life even of the flesh, can any artifice lay hold on the all-embracing life of spirit ? Let us abandon scheme-making about these high matters, and accept and contemplate with adoration their sublimity of living fact. For fact it is. Every man who is on the way to accomplish his destiny may become intellectually aware of it without any such intellectual device, because he lives not only by what Christ does for him and in him, but also by what he does in Christ towards the peopling of the City of God. His practical life may become in him intellectually explicit. He may learn

<sup>1</sup> Evelyn Underhill, “The Voice from the Cross,” in “Theophanies” (Dent & Sons).

to say in so many words, and with intelligence, "that this priesthood of the Lord is the consummation of a priesthood which runs through all visible life, and because it is a function of real life has its final effect in the eternal sphere."<sup>1</sup> But this is, doubtless, to become more explicit in regard to the true character of life as natural and sacramental throughout than most of us are, and it demands a serious exercise of reflexion and contemplation. To begin with, it calls on a man to consider the way in which he or any other man is drawn towards spiritual things from a state of life in which earthly things, taken in their superficial, not in their sacramental, aspect, seem all in all. That indeed is the first step in the atonement of himself which will make him freedman in the City of God.

Unquestionably the things of earth and the needs of the earthly life, regarded merely as such, insist on our attention. They often compel it. And since attention is as a sensitive grasping hand for the mind, these things do in a measure force that hand and mind. It was a prophet, seeing into the human mind as well as into the purposes of God for man, who wrote that the Lord came to Elijah not in the great and strong wind, nor in the earthquake or the fire, to which a man *must* attend, but in the still small voice he might neglect. The still small voice, the whispered word of God, makes all nature sacramental. The inward and spiritual grace of which natural things are outward and visible signs is proffered us as a whisper of God that may attract, but will never compel, the attention

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Nairne, "The Epistle of Priesthood," p. 36 (T. and T. Clark).

that would make our ears able to hear, our eyes to see. It is at once nature and sacrament ; it is spirit and tells of God ; it is natural and conjoined with the nature of man. But it does not insist. It is like divine love ; it is in truth that love expressed ; it is God first loving us in His love of creatures before we His creatures have learnt to love Him. And if we discover His beauty and even His love in the things of earth, we discover His own Word, His poetic utterance, His still small voice, transforming earth to His likeness. We discover Him using nature as a vehicle of His beauty and His love, and through it drawing out our love, and unsealing our eyes that we may look upon some effulgence of His glory. The passionate desire of our souls for His grace of loveliness and loving is revealed within us, and by His gifts we are enlarged that we may receive and yet again receive. So it is in respect of His holiness, of the beauty of which we catch glimpses through the clouded glass of the lives of our fellow-men. There too He speaks in a voice we may ignore or explain away, but here ignorance is for the most part bought at the price not of stupidity or dulness but of sin. Only a culpable ignorance can either pass over or explain away the atoning holiness and the sacrifice in self-giving of real saints, once we have seen them—that holiness which for the willing heart and mind is a thing that can be felt, like beauty. It is possible never to have met or heard of a real saint, one in whom our heart finds delight ; it may be possible never to have met or heard of one “good man,” but it is hardly possible not to have seen or heard of something good, something of a sacrificial self-giving, in

some man. So here, in men, is a stronger call and a clearer utterance of God. In the love of man for man, in the self-giving of man to man, the Word of God proclaims God Himself and the secret of His purpose for us all. Thus it proclaims too the divine kingdom in which all are made at one, and in which Christ's atoning work is complete. For by self-giving, that is, by sacrifice, by stretching out self beyond the limits of self-seeking towards the inclusion of all selves in a self-forgetful attention of love, men are partakers of both the atoning office of the eternal Christ and His oneness with the Father. They have within them the secret of atonement with the germ of the kingdom given them of God. There, in and through that secret, in and through that living germ which is the possession of the spiritual man, God's Word to men is spoken so that those who will hear may.

Do you remember the story of Gawdine in "The Roadmender," and its end? "He saw the face of a little child and looked on God." Thus to look on God, thus to hear His voice, is to begin to love and to receive Him. The divine kingdom and the way to it are the kingdom and the way of love. So wherever love is, there is God, and when love reaches a man's heart his atonement with God and men begins. Gawdine, led by the little child, entered the divine fellowship, and God entered his heart and dwelt with him. We are workers together with God; we are of the priesthood of the eternal Christ, through which God naturally, that is sacramentally and spiritually, works out our salvation. It is in Christ Jesus that our priesthood, like our humanity and the incarnation of



God, is crowned and consummated. "A priesthood which is universal, has been in the world from the beginning and possesses an unbroken life of growth running up at last into the perfect achievement of our Lord Jesus Christ"<sup>1</sup>—this is the priesthood in which all men, by right of manhood, and by grace of God, have their share. It is the sacramental and sacrificial priesthood of atonement shown, in the perfect sacrament and sacrifice of Christ, for what it has been from the beginning and is now. But again, even here, in the splendour of full achievement, man is respected. The Lord indeed "guards liberty in man as man guards the apple of his eye." Though there is no longer the still, small voice that never insists upon being heard, the open proclamation and the last extremity of self-giving are made in the failure of a shameful death, that down to our own day is for Jews a stumbling-block and for Greeks foolishness. For all mankind it is either the effective sign which attracts as none other does, or it repels like foolishness or a stumbling-block. The sensible man, with or without his sensible religion, the self-righteous and self-sufficient man, the narrowly self-seeking man who shuts his heart against his brother, find in the Cross nothing that will suit their case. If a man is not attracted by its virtue, if he knows nothing of a want it can supply, he will never see that virtue. The sacrament of Christ is forced on no man. The Word uttered, you might well say, in thunder, need not be heard. It is one with the least whisper of God.

Did you ever think how the wills of men might have

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 148.

been forced and themselves enslaved, had those legions of angels come to rescue Jesus from the Cross, drawn out the nails and before Roman soldiers and Jewish populace and priests borne Him away? The world surely would have rung with that news. Tacitus would have reported it, and not Tacitus alone. Down to our own day it would have rolled along the ages; and men—if they could not by some means have contrived to reject it—would everywhere have ceased to be true men. God would have been as clear as a proposition in geometry; and men's self-interest, for the most self-interested, men's attention even in the most self-centred, would have forced them to be His slaves. He would have spoken by that deed of rescue as though by the wind and the earthquake and the fire. No longer would He be the Only Fair, the object of the heart's desire; He would be no more than the Potter with His clay. But the supposition is absurd; this is not God's way. He has respect unto His creatures to the very last, to the very utmost of His atoning sacrifice for them. Not even He can break a way into their hearts; and He will never break the men, even though they seem about to destroy themselves for want of Him.

It is this that makes the demand for redemption so urgent. Men are not fit to be left to themselves lest they destroy themselves. It is this that brings their Redeemer to them urgent from the beginning, more and more urgent through the passing of the ages, until He is made manifest and "lifted up" in their own flesh, there telling them in visible action their own secret and His love. He speaks to them in His

utmost sacrifice and most translucent sacrament, in the breaking of the body and the shedding of the blood that is its life ; He speaks and He bestows. The eternal Christ, in that death upon the Cross, shows and communicates what sin has always called for, what itself has always wrought, and what it always needs for healing.

There have been times when men saw in that supreme sacrifice an appeasing of the wrath of God. They should have seen, and if they had kept faith with Jesus in the Gospels and had remembered that charter of their salvation—"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself,"—they would have seen, an appeasing rather of the wrath of man. "In God," Julian of Norwich, a very faithful Christian of the fourteenth century, said, "there may be no wrath, as to my sight. . . . Methought it was needful to see and to know that we are sinners, and do many evils that we ought to leave, and leave many good deeds undone that we ought to do : wherefore we deserve pain and wrath. And notwithstanding all this, I saw soothfastly that our Lord was never wroth, nor ever shall be. For He is God : Good, Life, Truth, Love, Peace ; His Clarity and His Unity suffereth Him not to be wroth. For I saw truly that it is against the property of His Might to be wroth, and against the property of His Wisdom, and against the property of His Goodness. . . . I understood this : Man is changeable in this life, and by frailty and overcoming falleth into sin : he is weak and unwise of himself, and also his will is overlaid. And in this time he is in a tempest and in sorrow and woe ; and the cause is blindness : for he seeth not God.

. . . I saw no wrath but on man's part. . . . And when I saw all this, it behoved me needs to grant that the mercy and forgiveness of God is to slacken and waste *our* wrath."

We have no more right or reason to see wrath in God than we have to see an omnipotence of compelling power in place of an omnipotence of love. Wrath in God, like power apart from the love which of its nature cannot compel, would be His own self-contradiction. There is wrath ; but only in ourselves, where at the last extreme we turn into a flaming sword, set against us for our outlawing and our death, the glory of His presence in His City of life.

Consider what our sin is. Blindness, says Mother Julian ; ignorance, though culpable. Consider how sin begins in the history of man. By little and little, by the discovery step by step of a new glimmering of light in reason and conscience that can quite easily be hidden, a new law barely discerned that calls for real effort against the grain of use and self-interest, a still, small voice that never clamours to be heard. Think how sin grows by small increments with the growth of opportunity and responsibility in a child. Think how immeasurably greater the Christian's opportunities for sin and the Christian's sins are than the opportunities for sin and the sins of the newly-human animal from whom he sprang, or of the child he was. Consider how the growth of sin hangs on the growth of knowledge and responsibility, and ask yourself where, at what point in such progress, wrath would become appropriate (if such a contradiction of nature there could be) in God. Is it to be where the effort

not to sin, the struggle against sin and the fall into sin, alike are greatest? Is it to be in regard to the first failure to respond to the divine whisper of conscience given through some family or tribal need, or through the child's newborn perception of a call for self-denial? Or will you fix some arbitrarily chosen point between?

No, the wrath is ours, and God works from the beginning until now to allay it. Do we not know that this allaying of wrath marks precisely one aspect of man's atoning work for man? Wherever there is wrath in the sinner, that wrath which makes God's glory and His proffered graces odious to him, is not the first thing his brother-man who loves and seeks him must try to effect, this appeasing, this breaking down of the barrier wrath sets up, not only between man and God but between man and man? "I can hardly think," says Sir Thomas Browne, "there was ever any scared into Heaven; they go the fairest way to Heaven that would serve God without a Hell; other Mercenaries that crouch into Him in fear of Hell, though they term themselves the servants are indeed but the slaves, of the Almighty. And to be true, and speak my soul, when I survey the occurrences of my life, and call into account the Finger of God, I can perceive nothing but an abyss and mass of mercies, either in general to mankind, or in particular to myself."

"To be true, and speak my soul." If the Christian spoke from his soul, such would always be his verdict in the matter of this strange trial of God at the bar of man's justice. It is from our many inventions, and our reasoning from lower analogues of human life than that of love, that we come to speak of wrath and

anger in God. We might as well charge Him with covetousness, envy, or pride, which, together with wrath, are, says William Law, "the four elements of Hell." But there is wrath in man, there are covetousness, envy, and pride—all the elements of hell; and these are enough to demand the fulness of the almighty power in love to redeem us from slavery to ourselves, from that slavery which is hell. We are true children of wrath, many of us, made what we are by sin established in ourselves. We hold fast to our guilty ignorance. Growing with our growth in self-seeking, strengthening with the strength of our excluding self-regard, sin has smitten us with the blindness that shuts out God. To remain blind with the consent of will, to cling to ignorance as better than the knowledge we might turn to if we would, is our way of approach to spiritual suicide. We may travel slowly perhaps, but if we follow that road however slowly we end by self-destruction in "the second death." Life hangs for us on the continual gift of life, our human spirit perishes without the sustenance of the divine. Spiritually we slay ourselves if we finally refuse to be saved from spiritual death by the grace and gift of eternal life in God. The possibility of making that refusal is one of our rights of manhood. God Himself does not take it away.

We are told that the modern man is not worrying about his sins. Is he then so sure of God? Can he be as sure of Him as such a man as St. Paul, who, while knowing and owning himself to be the chief of sinners, knows and owns too that in his life Christ lives, and that only so is he secure? Or is such a man thinking



of a different God who is most likely at least as good-natured as himself, an arbitrary, kindhearted king who can do what he pleases with his subjects ? Does he rely, perhaps, upon an omnipotent God who is both able and willing to open the gates of His City to any applicant, however ill-fitted for citizenship, and will doubtless abate the flames of His glory if they are disliked ? Is it some such God as this that the modern man relies on when he declines to worry about his sins ? If it is, he will do well to think not of a magician-God powerful enough to falsify His very self, but of the Christian's God, "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." He will do well to learn that this God cannot force him to be that which he himself wills not to be, cannot cleanse him from the sins he is not worrying about, as long as he is so comfortably sure he needs no cleansing. There was only one kind of sinner denounced by the Lord Jesus, and that sinner was the self-righteous, self-sufficient man. The modern mode of self-righteousness provides no way of escape from His denunciation, or way of forcing an entrance into the City of the redeemed.

They are an obstinate and a various folk, the self-righteous ; in these days they seldom wear the garb of piety ; but it was in regard to them in all their varieties that the Lord said He did not come to call any to repentance—it was no use.

Yet "repent ye," change your minds, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" is the first word of preparation for the Good News of Christ. Observe, we are told to change our minds, not because hell-fire awaits us if we do not, but because the heavenly king-

dom is close upon us. It is that for which we were created, and without which we fall below our own estate. We have to change our minds, because God Himself cannot let us into His kingdom and give it into the charge of our hearts while the desire of our hearts and the attention of our minds are bestowed elsewhere. If, then, we are of the self-righteous our case is worse than that of the worst of the sinners whom Jesus called to Him. We have closed our minds against Him and crushed down the native desire of our souls.

A great part, surely, of the disappointment of Jesus, when He found His call to the kingdom of God fail of the answer He sought, must have been due to this obstinate self-sufficiency of the self-righteous man ; of whom there may well have been far more than were reckoned among the Pharisees. When He abandoned the effort to lead by the pattern and infection of a self-giving life spent in the common ways of men, and set Himself to bring the kingdom upon them as it were by storm, it seems to have been because He had failed by other means to overcome their resistance. We hear Him telling Himself how, along the ages, far back, they had killed the prophets and stoned the messengers of God. Let them kill Him, more than a prophet and a messenger, the chosen and anointed Son of God and Son of Man. He would offer for them the crowning sacrifice.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The Public Ministry . . . consists of two strongly contrasted stages, divided by the great scene of Jesus with the Apostles alone at Caesarea Philippi. . . . The stage before is predominantly expansive, hopeful, peacefully growing ; the stage after is concentrated, sad, in conflict, and in storm. To the first stage belong the

He left the common ways of men to carry out "the final act and crown of His service." In that act, upon the shameful Cross, He consummated the sacramental and sacrificial priesthood of salvation which He was to bear with Him to "the right hand of God." On that Cross the divine Word was proclaimed in a sacrament visible to all men ; God's love and man's were shown in a sacrifice to death—"greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." The ultimate appeal is made to us blinded sinful men, his brothers and his friends. Love can no further go even in a human life fully manifesting the divine, even in a sacramental nature through which at last the Spirit of God so plainly speaks.

This great sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction made by Christ Jesus is, as we say, full, perfect, and sufficient, not because it is effected by Him in "our place and stead," but because He who thus effects it is of one nature and one spirit with us all, a nature and a spirit in which by birth and by descent, by intercommunion and interpenetration in the essential unity of both spirit and nature, we have our vital share. Bodily we are one with earth and stars ; bodily and spiritually we are one with Christ Jesus. Therefore if we will—

plant parables, full of exquisite sympathy with the unfolding of natural beauty and of slow fruitfulness ; to the second stage belong the parables of keen watchfulness and of the proximate, sudden second coming. Both movements are essential to the physiognomy of our Lord. And they are not simply differences in self-manifestation ; they represent a growth, a relatively new element in His human soul's experience and outlook." Baron Friedrich von Hügel, *Essay on "Progress in Religion,"* p. 114, in "*Progress and History,*" edited Marvin (Milford).

but this is of our choice—we may be one with Him in sacrifice ; with Him we may “ die to live.” There is no other sacrifice that we can make, and His is ours—if we will. It is natural and universal, like His priesthood and the sacrament of nature that He carries to the heights of heaven. There is, in brief, but one sacrifice for the sins of the whole world ; and it is His and the whole world’s. But it should be ours, and it must be if we are to fulfil our destiny ; not necessarily crowned like His upon a visible Cross set up in sight of all men, but offered as He offered it throughout life and unto death. That is why, in the sacrament of the altar, we are able to say with heart and mind that His is indeed the “ full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world.” There is no other ; it is the express manifestation of the atoning action and process of the one eternal Christ, incarnate in man from the beginning and for ever ; and it is partially and obscurely shown through all ages and in all places of men, but with surpassing clearness and surpassing power on that Mount of Calvary where Jesus died.

VI

THE HOLY SPIRIT

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## SYNOPSIS

### SUMMARY.

I. The need and opportunity for a fresh study of the subject.

- (a) Modern Immanentism gives us a new incentive and a new standpoint and presents many points of contact.
- (b) Church teaching, both theological and popular, has failed to revise traditional ideas and is confused and chaotic.
- (c) Hence this attempt to re-examine our knowledge.

II. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit as found in Scripture and studied from the modern standpoint.

- (a) His nature and works.
  - (1) The Spirit of Holiness—not arbitrary nor mechanical but conditioned by our response and evidenced by fruits of character.
  - (2) The Spirit of Truth—working on the psychic not the intellectual plane and evidenced
    - (a) by quickened instincts,
    - (β) by supranormal powers, healing, tongues, prophecy.
  - (3) The Spirit of Love—evidenced by intuitive sympathy and free response of individual to corporate consciousness.

(b) His person.

The Spirit of Life—making for betterment in evolution of nature and of man.

(c) Our results approximate closely to modern Immanentism.

### III. Objections to this interpretation of the Holy Spirit.

(a) Is it consistent with the revelation in Jesus ?

(b) Or with the omnipotence of God ?

(c) Or with the doctrine of the Trinity ?

### IV. Value and lessons of the doctrine in view of the war.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT

No one can attempt to write even a short and untechnical article upon the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit without feelings of the gravest hesitation. For some years past we have been warned by eminent and devout scholars that no aspect of Christian theology is of more urgent importance. And from the silence of most and the caution of all recent writers may be inferred the difficulty of the theme. One shrinks from seeming to rush in where so many others much more highly qualified have feared to tread.

And in my own case there are particular reasons for dismay. Of recent years my studies have been mainly directed towards the doctrine of the Incarnation and especially to the history of the Two-Natures controversy; and the invitation to write this paper only reached me on the eve of my departure for France. My opportunities for systematic preliminary study have been almost none, books have only been obtainable in small numbers and under grave difficulties, and the writing itself has had to be done in such scraps of time as could be spared, largely on the battlefields of Artois. In such circumstances my work must needs be tentative. The only compensation for lack of study is that my essay comes from an atmosphere

in which, although on the surface love, joy, and peace are conspicuously absent, there is signal proof every hour of the fruits of that Spirit Who searches the hearts of men, of that Comforter Who stands beside them as Advocate when they are called to the trial of their manhood.

That the time is fully ripe for a new preaching of our belief in the Holy Ghost is abundantly clear. The whole tendency of thought during the past century, as we look back over the great epoch which had its beginning in the democratic and scientific movements, has been enforcing the need upon us. Despite the gallant but, as we are now more able to see, the reactionary efforts of the Tractarians and their successors, the whole trend of study has been towards a fuller insistence upon the immanent aspect of God and the progressive quality of revelation. Such insistence is not without its danger both for theology and for religion; for it has led many to an exaggerated neglect of the transcendent and of the static elements of truth. The Holy Spirit, the representative of the divine in its operation within us, must not be divorced from the other Persons of the Trinity: such a divorce robs religion of all its security and most of its positive contents by reducing it to the level of individual caprice. But the Church's failure to use and lead the modern conception of the universe is in no small measure due to the weakness of her grasp upon the theology of the Third Person in the Godhead, and a return to the religion of the Spirit ought to help her greatly in her effort to win back her children that have gone astray.

That the discovery of the scientific method should have had this result follows both from the negative and from the positive sides of its teaching. On the negative, the rejection of Scholasticism with its principle of working downwards from the general to the particular in favour of the new doctrine that all hypotheses must be held subject to the test of verification by experiment has taught men that in theology as in all other fields of inquiry we must start not from dogmas about God but from the facts of religious experience, from the immanent, not from the transcendent. Science has made us conscious of our ignorance: it has fostered a reverent willingness to admit the limitations of our knowledge, a shrinking from all claims to infallibility, a desire to prove all things and to accept only that which comes within the legitimate scope of human inquiry. So, too, on the positive side, the principle of evolution has for the time at least triumphed over that of revolution. We are trying to see life in its unity, as a single great process of divine self-revelation, manifested through the slow development and perfecting of the natural order, and through the struggle of mankind upwards from the brute to the child of God. Recent discoveries in physics, with the light which they throw upon the composition of matter, have but emphasised that same oneness of things which Darwin's hypothesis sought to demonstrate in the sphere of biology. Psychical research, though at present its results seem hardly to have emerged from the empirical stage, points in the same direction. Even philosophy, which in these days has learnt to wait upon experience, has shown a movement

analogous to that which has dominated the physical sciences. On the negative side we have in the writings of the pragmatists the same revolt against absolutism, and the same appeal to experience. On the positive we have the immanentism of Eucken and Bergson.<sup>1</sup> Everywhere we are warned to see the one in and through the many: the old barriers which segregated elements or individuals or faculties into watertight compartments are being broken down: the universe is more and more being revealed to us as a unity. Side by side with this widespread tendency in the realm of thought, in the sphere of action the great democratic movements were developing on similar principles. The French Revolution had been the death-blow not only of a king but of the kingly authority. Henceforward it was clear that power over the community was to be vested only in the body of citizens, and that though these might delegate executive duties to officials, yet such officials would only possess a derivative and conditional influence. The old theories of the State as the property of the monarch, or of society as a contract between rival parties had gone; and a new conception of the body-

<sup>1</sup> Bergson's doctrine is not so purely immanent as Eucken's. He says of himself, "The considerations set forth in my '*Essai sur les données immédiates*' result in bringing to light the fact of freedom; those of '*Matière et Mémoire*' point directly, I hope, to the reality of spirit; those of '*L'Évolution Créatrice*' exhibit creation as a fact. From all this emerges clearly the idea of God, Creator and free, the generator of both matter and life, whose work of creation is continued on the side of life by the evolution of species and the building up of human personalities. From all this emerges, consequently, a refutation of monism and of pantheism in general" *Henri Bergson*, pp. 43 and 44, Ruhe and Paul: (Macmillan & Co.).



politic expressing its corporate will through its duly regulated members had taken their place.

This change is of supreme significance for theology. It has been well said that a man's theory of the government of the universe will normally be reflected from his experience of the government of his particular country. It was no accident that Tories with their reverence for authority and the past should be usually High-Churchmen of an old-fashioned type ; or that Liberals should have the unfailing support of the Non-conformist vote in their struggles for the freedom of the individual. If men have any clear principles at all, those principles will apply both to their politics and their religion. Along with belief in the divine right of kings, men were prepared to accept a monarchical, not to say a despotic, notion of the Almighty. Under the influence of theories of the social contract they developed a theology of the mutual obligations of God to man and man to God. With the dawning of democracy it seemed inevitable that they should incline to a concept of the divine as dwelling in and expressed by the totality of His creatures. Indeed it is from the Social Democrats rather than from the scientists or philosophers that this new stress upon "Immanentism" has received its loudest expression, and found its way at last into popular religion. I well remember Mr. Bernard Shaw coming down to Cambridge in 1910 and discoursing to us of the deity who through the age-old efforts of humanity was struggling towards an articulate expression of his nature. Those of us who knew "Creative Evolution" thought we could recognise the source of his ideas ;

and when Mr. G. K. Chesterton shortly after demolished with a dazzling display of dialectic this theology of a "blind puppy" God, we felt that his brilliance had somehow failed to do justice to the element of truth which his rival in the art of paradox had contributed. Since then the idea of a God who suffers and strives in the highest aspirations of collective humanity has been made familiar to us all in the spiritual adventures of Mr. Britling.

The case of Mr. H. G. Wells is indeed admirably fitted to illustrate the whole movement. As he has said himself, he may stand as an average individual, "the scribe to the spirit of his generation," albeit, we must add, supremely gifted in the power of self-expression and brilliantly lucid in the analysis of his own moods and those of his contemporaries. His books provide an excellent compass to show us from which quarter the *popularis aura* is blowing. He starts with vast dreams of the future possibilities of science—dreams which commence with the escape from time and visibility, and which grow steadily less extravagant until he becomes content with mere giants and supermen. Then for a period he seems to lose confidence. Is science able to eliminate the brute? Is not humanity simply a tissue of births spun by the procreative instinct of the life force? His characters grow depraved: his whole tone is coloured by a strong sensuality. The physical element has prevailed over the intellectual. Man is no longer an explorer of the interstellar space, he is a wallower in the muck-heap. The wings of science have failed and their wearer lies grovelling. So far his books are a reflection of the later years of the last

century, when the bright vision which had first come to man all radiant with the promise of new worlds to conquer had faded into a nightmare spectre, enslaving him in the fetters of a brutish past, to be the sport of primitive forces and unbending laws, in a world empty of God. But Mr. Wells, unlike most of the pessimists, has lived to see mankind, like a new Samson blinded and bound, shake off its chains and in the crash of world-wide destruction vindicate its freedom and its might. Even before the war we find him returning to the preaching of a Socialist gospel, a message of hope based upon a belief that in the corporate consciousness of our race was something not wholly selfish and animal. At first his language is purely humanistic : he has merely discovered that man, if a little lower than the angels, is not wholly of the beasts that perish. Indeed it is not until the last hundred pages of " Mr. Britling " that he is driven to clothe this humanism in the language of religion, to find in the souls of men the evidence of a struggling God. It is worth while to quote a few phrases, although the book is so familiar, because no popular expression of the present prevailing Immanentism serves so well as a background for our study of the Church's doctrine of the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Wells's later book " God the Invisible King " is to the present writer disappointing. It does not mark any appreciable advance on " Mr. Britling," and the new expansion only serves to reveal as thin and vague what in the previous book appeared suggestive and full of possibilities. It is sadly marred by the author's ignorance of Christian history and theology, and by the occasional bitterness and patronage of his attitude. It is bad form as well as bad policy to despise what you have not really tried to understand.

“The theologians,” he writes (in “Mr. Britling Sees it Through,” pp. 397–399), “have been extravagant about God. They have had silly absolute ideas that he is all-powerful. That he’s omni-everything. But the commonsense of man knows better. Every real religious thought denies it. After all, the real God of the Christians is Christ, not God Almighty ; a poor mocked and wounded God nailed on a cross of matter. . . . God is not absolute ; God is finite . . . A finite God who struggles in his great and comprehensive way as we struggle in our weak and silly way—who is with us—that is the essence of all real religion.” And again, “God is within Nature and necessity. Necessity is a thing beyond God—beyond good and ill, beyond space and time, a mystery everlastingly impenetrable. God is nearer than that. Necessity is the uttermost thing, but God is the innermost thing. Closer he is than breathing and nearer than hands and feet. He is the Other Thing than this world. Greater than Nature or Necessity, for he is a spirit and they are blind, but not controlling them. . . . Not yet. . . .” And again, “It is . . . so easy to understand that there is a God, and how complex and wonderful and brotherly he is, when one thinks of those dear boys who by the thousand, by the hundred thousand, have laid down their lives . . . If there was nothing else in all the world but our kindness for each other . . . if there was nothing else at all—if everything else was cruelty and mockery and filthiness and bitterness, it would still be certain that there was a God of love and righteousness.” And finally, “How can God be a Person ; how can he be anything that matters to man,

unless he is limited and defined and human like ourselves . . . with things outside and beyond him.”<sup>1</sup>

Now although this kind of utterance, like all the rather loose talk of the Life-force, of the Power which makes for betterment, of the Mass-consciousness which shows itself in something distinct from the sum of the individual consciousnesses, may seem little more than positivism given a theistic garment, it has real value for us Christians partly because it reaffirms the truth of those elements in life which find their fullest expression in the Cross, but particularly because it approaches very closely, and if studied might help us to understand, the Church’s doctrine of the Holy Spirit. I have quoted these typical words of Mr. Wells because the concept of God which they contain is after all strangely like St. John’s teaching of the Paraclete, who shows up the world in its ideas of sin and righteousness and the choice between them, whom we know from His presence and indwelling among and in us ; or St.

<sup>1</sup> This is simply Bergson popularised ; cf., for example, “L’Évolution Créatrice,” p. 273 (Eng. tr. p. 265): “L’élan de vie . . . consiste, en somme, dans une exigence de création. Il ne peut créer absolument, parce qu’il rencontre devant lui la matière, c’est-à-dire le mouvement inverse du sien. Mais il se saisit de cette matière, qui est la nécessité même, et il tend à y introduire la plus grande somme possible d’indétermination et de liberté.” Cf., also, p. 276 (p. 267-8): “L’élan est fini, et il a été donné une fois pour toutes. Il ne peut pas surmonter tous les obstacles. Le mouvement qu’il imprime est tantôt dévié, tantôt divisé, toujours contrarié, et l’évolution du monde organisé n’est que le déroulement de cette lutte.” And for the same in more theistic language, p. 270 (p. 262): “Dieu, ainsi défini, n’a rien de tout fait ; il est vie incessante, action, liberté.” But Mr. Wells (“God the Invisible King,” pp. 18-21) has vitiated Bergson’s teaching by dogmatically dissecting the *élan de vie* into two opposing “Beings”—the Life-Force and God.



Paul's of the Spirit who with voiceless groanings gives to our blind aspirations a purpose and strength, takes part in the struggle in support of our weakness, and confirms our highest instincts of Sonship and brotherhood. Surely Christianity has room for divine immanence, and even, if God is love, for divine struggle and suffering, and the Church might well fasten upon this present tendency and welcome it. For in doing so she would not only contribute to the philosophy of immanence just those elements of clearness and security which she derives from her belief in Jesus as God incarnate, in the Father as God transcendent, and in Love as the Substance of Deity, but would, I believe, immensely strengthen her grasp on what is at present the least known and most elusive problem in theology.

And that such a strengthening is urgently needed is clear enough to anyone who has the least interest in popular beliefs. It is never easy to find appropriate metaphors for spiritual ideas, and the most exalted and living language becomes with frequent repetition debased and distorted from its true significance. But probably no other single term in common use conveys so obscure an image, such vague and contradictory meanings, as the term Holy Spirit. Even among people of sound intelligence we have some saying that the Spirit must be entirely free from all material expressions of itself, since it works only in the still silence of man's heart when he goes apart with God—as if men were disembodied phantoms, and as if a God who had no contact with matter was of the slightest value to them: while others are not less insistent



that the Spirit is to be bestowed not only through outward signs, but through certain precise and particular rites—as if we were still living in the days of white magic and as if the fruits of holiness in those outside the sacred circle did not convict such notions of narrowness or blasphemy.

It is never easy (and it is a sad confession for a Churchman to make) to discover exactly what the average Anglican, whether lay or clerical, does think on any subject of doctrine. Our ordinands are trained in almost every other branch of their many-sided work; but in dogmatics, as I have found in a long experience of examinations, they too often confine their studies to an acquaintance with the formal and traditional definitions and proof-texts, unless the matter happens to be one of partisan value. Thus while they will generally have an acute knowledge of the grounds for belief in the inspiration of Scripture or the authority of the Catholic Church, and will display what they have learnt with a fervour often bordering on the acrimonious, they very rarely indeed give any sign of serious thought upon the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and, if questioned on the subject, their answers yield nothing beyond the quotation of such arguments as bear upon His “double procession.” Surely no one, whether teacher or student, can expect to understand inspiration except by the study of the source from which it is drawn. Our attitude towards this source must determine our whole outlook upon the dealings of God with man. But their ignorance is characteristic of the tendency of our Church and people towards what is called practicality: we

deliberately limit our attention to such individual problems as happen at the moment to confront us ; bring to their solution a mass of detailed and often inconsistent arguments of an *ad hominem* character ; entirely neglect the study of the general principles which underlie the details and if comprehended would give us clear and constant guidance ; and then justify our actions by the plea of expediency or by the boast that we can always “ muddle through somehow.” To attempt to train our spiritual teachers on such lines is surely utterly wrong ; but that we do so in the majority of cases must be well known to every examiner of candidates for ordination, and shrewdly conjectured by the members of most parochial congregations.

And in this particular case it must be admitted that popular theological literature has been gravely to blame. Over and over again in those collections of essays which have been such a marked feature of recent publishing, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has been entirely omitted. Even so stimulating a book as “ Foundations,” which professedly aimed at a statement of Christian belief in terms of modern thought, discussed the Church and Authority with no special and very little incidental reference to the Third Person of the Trinity. No doubt in that case the omission was largely due to the desire to concentrate upon Jesus Christ and to avoid seeming to divorce the Holy Spirit from Him, as is done in so much current preaching and speech. But the effect of silence is only to increase uncertainty and to give colour to the suspicion either that the Holy

Ghost is relatively unimportant, or that the modern mind does not know or dare not say what its views on the subject are. The difficulty of the whole matter, though it may well terrify any modest person, and must impose caution upon all who recognise the sin of causing God's children to stumble and the danger of disturbing long-established ideas, is in itself a weighty argument against reticence. Even criticism or disbelief, if it be sincere and unembittered, is a truer service of the Spirit of Truth, a clearer testimony to the Spirit of Life, than the lip-service of lightly accepted formulæ or the torpor of embarrassed hesitation. In this, as in so many other departments of religious thought and action, our Church is paralysed for lack either of authoritative guidance or, failing that, of courageous experiment. The free discussion of a candid thesis, even if it lead to just condemnation of its author, has never failed in the long run to promote knowledge and increase vitality. If progress is to be made in the Church's understanding of and co-operation with the Spirit of God, such free discussion is essential ; and the time is ripe for it.

For while those who have the opportunity and the duty of study are silent, what must the confusion be amongst the mass of churchgoers ? A medley of pictures suggested by the "dove," the "tongues of fire," the "rushing mighty wind," baptismal "regeneration," the "laying on of hands," the "inspired Word," the "Comforter," the "Holy Ghost"—all these, which are hardly ever explained from our pulpits except in an atmosphere of controversy, tend to produce in most minds an attitude either of

bewilderment or of superstition. We pray "Take not thy Holy Spirit from us": I have often longed to see into the minds of a congregation and discover what special meaning those words bear for them. To the majority doubtless that clause, like much of our Prayer-book, is simply a familiar formula recited with a general idea that it is all part of the ritual of a well-spent Sunday, that God and the clergy know what is good for us, and that in view of that knowledge a certain indefiniteness of petition is no bad thing. To many it would be connected with the hymn verse which ought to simplify matters by explaining that "every virtue we possess" is "His alone"; but even to them the result, as I know in my own experience, is either meaningless or Calvinistic. How many, I wonder, would recognise the contents of the prayer if it were paraphrased as "Take not from us the impulse towards holiness"?

Probably just in this lies the most elementary ground of our confusion, that to us the word "Holy" when applied to the Spirit of God has become a conventional prefix as devoid of ethical meaning as is the "Saint" which we glibly bestow upon those who are entitled to bear halos. The name<sup>1</sup> "the Spirit the Holy One," which to the Christians who first used it was full of moral teaching, has now, like so much else in the New Testament, exchanged its moral value for a technical or at best a metaphysical one; it has become a cant phrase; and, as always where

<sup>1</sup> In the Old Testament the epithet is found only in the LXX version of Psalm 1, 13, and of Isaiah lxiii, 11; it is found also in Psalms of Solomon xvii, 42; but nowhere else.

this happens, its use has in consequence become increasingly formal, mechanical and artificial. A closely parallel case may be seen in the word "justification," which in its Greek form inevitably suggested "righteousness," but which now has lost much of its ethical significance, has too often been allowed to be divorced from sanctification, and so has suffered misunderstanding and misuse. If we could bring ourselves fully to realise the import of the adjective, our conception of the Holy Spirit would lose much of its magical and arbitrary character and would be far more easily converted into terms of practical experience. Suppose I am praying for the Holy Spirit to descend upon an ordinand; let me be sure that it is in the holiness of his life that my prayer is to take effect. Suppose I am imploring the help of the Comforter in bereavement; I am begging that the vision of holiness, the nearness of a Holy God, may bring peace and trust to the stricken. I am listening to the "Grace" and seeking to win "the fellowship of the Holy Spirit"; my desire is a mockery unless I consecrate myself to be holy among those "called to be saints." Here as always "the letter killeth"; we must learn its reality in our own concrete experience if it is to bring us a message of life. Religion can never be separated from conduct, except with grave loss on both sides.

We have laid much stress upon this at the start of our inquiry into the Church's doctrine because once it is grasped a great deal of our present misunderstanding will be cleared up. For example, with this thought of the Spirit as the Impulse towards holiness

in our minds, we surely can no longer seriously maintain that the Holy Spirit's sphere of action is confined to those who have been baptized or that apostolic succession is of the *esse* of the Church. The "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*" theology which the Fathers of Carthage defended with such inevitable and pitiless logic has simply come into collision with that rock of experience which is so often fatal to the consistency and completeness of our theorising. We are not in this Essay concerned specially with such questions, nor do I mean for one moment to deny that rules are essential for the orderly conduct of any earthly society, or that the Church has a perfect right to impose such ordinances as the collective and inspired wisdom of her leaders may have established. Only it would seem clear that the man who denies to those outside his particular ring-fence the indwelling of the Spirit when His fruits are manifest in their lives, is in grave danger of ascribing God's work to Beelzebub and of blaspheming the very Being whose honour he is professing to vindicate. Cornelius was acceptable despite the prejudice of the Apostles because he feared God and wrought righteousness, and the Spirit came upon him, so that no one could forbid the water of baptism. Barnabas was a "good man and full of the Holy Ghost," and when he was selected for his mission prayer was offered and his gifts were confirmed by the sacrament of the laying on of hands. It was the power to bestow the gift of holiness, not the right to use the outward sign, that Simon Magus tried to buy, and he was warned that he had no part nor lot in it because his heart was evil. Indeed in the New



Testament times the Spirit is never separate in thought from the gifts which reveal His presence. He is made manifest in His works. And Holiness is the sum and substance of them all.

To illustrate this and to show how completely the consecration of the individual conditions his ability to receive inspiration and display its fruits, it will be well before we consider the operations of the Holy Ghost to remind ourselves of the events which led up to and made possible the pentecostal gift. The disciples of Jesus had been submitted by their Master to a long and searching discipline. They had been called and had obeyed the call and had lived in close companionship with Him : they had been sent to serve, had received power, and had returned rejoicing that even the demons were subject to them in His Name : they had been challenged to confess Him, had through St. Peter acknowledged His Messiahship, and had been privileged to see Him in glory on the Mount. All these experiences would seem calculated to convey to them the Holy Ghost ; but none the less " the Spirit was not yet, for Jesus was not yet glorified." <sup>1</sup> Their training still lacked its final stage ; their lives were not yet consecrated : they were not yet

<sup>1</sup> It is easy to explain such a phrase mechanically and on purely supernatural lines, and by so doing to obscure the significance of the whole matter. Doctrine, and especially this aspect of it, loses much of its meaning by being interpreted solely from the divine side. We are too apt to think and to act as if we thought that the Holy Spirit was given arbitrarily and independently of human conditions. This text, for example, does not imply that there was any cause, apart from the attitude of the disciples, to postpone the coming of the Paraclete until Jesus had gone away ; rather the delay is due to their unfitness to receive the gift.

“ holy,” and would not be until they had passed through the fires of failure and despair, and therein had purged away their sins. Calvary was an essential condition of Pentecost because without it mankind could not rise to the new conception of holiness and of God expressed in terms of love and self-surrender of which Calvary was the demonstration and Pentecost the consequence. The Apostles had not yet attained to it. Even after the close of the Galilean ministry and the giving of the great confession they are still men of double mind, unstable in all their ways. They are full of small jealousies, quarrelling which should be greatest, seeking thrones and privileges, asking “ Lord, what shall we have ? ”, urging the Master to hasten the end and show them the Father, boasting to the very last of the depth of their devotion. And so, because they cared not only or wholly for Him but somewhat also for themselves, because they were still keeping back part of the price, they failed. When He needed them most, they forsook Him : when their opportunity came, they fled : when the crisis of man’s history was reached, they, like Israel, denied and were condemned. In those dread hours when their Lord was crucified and buried, they were called to share His sufferings, to see themselves for what they were, forsworn and traitors, to learn a death unto sin in the bitterness of remorse and despair, and from the fulness of their humiliation, the abasement of their penitence, when they had come to know the utter worthlessness of self, to rise with Him from the dead to the hope and joy of Easter. In His resurrection they discovered the eternity of the love which gives

itself even unto death, they recognised that the Cross was not a defeat but a triumph, they saw that Jesus who had died was alive again, and thenceforward they knew that though they were nothing He was all, that His strength was sufficient for them, that He had overcome the world. The Ascension symbolised and made plain their knowledge that their Master was indeed one with God, that in serving Jesus they had behind them the whole power of the universe, that to Him they could devote not only their love but their worship. And after this double revelation they were at last hallowed; their training was complete: they were ready to receive power: they had learned to know the mind which was in Christ Jesus; that mind, that spirit, could now be formed in them. Self could no longer resist: they had earned the blessing upon purity of heart and could see God; their eye was single and their whole body full of light; through the travail of Calvary they had come to the new birth of the Spirit. Pentecost represents for them, and for us, the beginning of a fresh epoch in human ethics.

That was the experience which made possible the gift of another Comforter. It had been a long and in part bitter preparation: for the fight with self must always be hard and can never be free from pain. But if the suffering is great the reward is great also. And we, who are so ready to pray lightly for the grace of the Holy Ghost and are so slow to recognise or accept the stern conditions on which alone our prayers can be granted, need perpetually to remind ourselves alike of the gravity of our contest and of the splendour of our hope. Those men turned their world upside

down because they had first died with Christ unto sin ; we shall not win our world for Him by any other or easier means. But granted the means, for us as for them the promise stands and the end is sure.

It is not necessary in view of the very full treatment of the subject in several recent books to develop at all fully the biblical and ecclesiastical teaching on the Holy Ghost. All we need do in order to show that the treatment of the subject in the New Testament corresponds much more closely to modern ideas than does the majority of conventional ideas in Church circles is to draw attention quite briefly to the double aspect of His work as it affects the individual and the society, and then to summarise our results so far as they give us a conception of His nature and person. And Scripture must be our chief guide. For although, as Dr. Swete<sup>1</sup> has shown, there is a considerable wealth of allusions to the Spirit in the literature of the Early Church, it is none the less true that the richest and most profound of the Fathers were seriously hampered in their treatment of the theme by the persistent confusion between *Logos*<sup>2</sup> and *Pneuma*, that there

<sup>1</sup> His book "The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church" is an invaluable catena of patristic evidence ; but, as he points out (pp. 407-409), this only goes beyond the New Testament in the matter of the relation of the Spirit to the Trinity and of His personality, and in the somewhat fuller exposition of lines of thought already traceable in St. Paul and St. John. Dr. Swete ("The Holy Spirit in the New Testament," p. 359) says that in the New Testament we find treated "not a doctrine, but an experience." In the Fathers the tendency is towards a reversal of this. Hence for us the superior importance of Scripture.

<sup>2</sup> If we could apply to the Holy Spirit what the Greek Fathers teach us about the immanent Logos, we could obtain powerful support for the views maintained in these pages.

is a regrettable lack of systematic study of the subject, and that they neither add to nor even elucidate greatly the teaching of the Bible.

Jesus had promised that when the Spirit of Truth was come He should guide men into all truth ; and it is this power of bestowing spiritual intuition that appears most prominently among the works ascribed to Him,<sup>1</sup> alike in the Old and in the New Testament. It is in the sphere of man's instinctive perceptions that the Holy Spirit manifests Himself throughout. There is an immediate recognition of a new attitude towards God : " those who are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God " ; an abiding sense of fellowship, even of unity with all men and especially with those who share in the one Spirit ; a strengthening of the moral nature, a deepened conviction of the horror of sin, and an added power in the struggle between the Spirit and the flesh ; a boldness of utterance such as comes when earthly peril is seen in its true perspective and men are enabled intuitively and without forethought to defend themselves and proclaim their message ; a clarity of insight so that St. Peter perceives the deception of Ananias, and the prophets at Antioch recognise the fitness of Barnabas and Saul for missionary work ; a heightened sensitiveness which makes St. Peter cognisant of the approach of Cornelius's messengers, and enables Agabus to predict from the touch of his girdle the destiny of St. Paul ; a wisdom not the lore of the sage or the labour of the student,

<sup>1</sup> In this connection it is interesting to note that in the list of spiritual gifts in 1 Cor. xii, 8-11 *sophia* and *gnosis* are mentioned before the more thaumaturgic works.



but a humble sincerity that can search all things, yea the deep things of God.

On occasions this instinctive energy displays itself in still more striking fashion. Those men who have felt in themselves the presence and the power of God are in some few cases at least able to control physical disease. Their union with the source of life gives them something of the creative power to mould matter to conformity with its own highest good. In them as in their Master is revealed the potency of a life lived on a high level of spiritual development—a potency which we on our lower plane are apt sometimes to discredit and which our age is only beginning to rediscover and accept. The Spirit is confessed by us as the Lord and Giver of life, and those who come into harmony with Him are able to signify to us by works of power the truth of His titles.

And they display two other kindred signs, the speaking with tongues and the prophet's ecstasy, both symptomatic of the strongly psychic atmosphere of their lives. The *glossolalia* to hearers within the scope of the emotional impulse and in sympathy with the speaker conveyed a meaning that could sometimes and to some extent be expressed intelligibly: they could testify to "hearing in their own tongues the marvellous works of God"; and truly so, for in moments of intuition soul can speak to soul as it speaks in music through a medium more native to us than language. That this gift did not involve, as some scholars still seem to maintain, a miraculous knowledge of all languages and a still more miraculous ability to utter them all at once is plain enough from St. Paul's whole treatment



of the subject. Indeed no clearer description of an ecstatic and wordless utterance could be given than that which he presents to us in such sayings as "If I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful," or "He that speaks in a tongue speaks not unto men, but unto God; for no one understands, but he utters revelations spiritually."<sup>1</sup> Indeed we might be forced to conclude that the gift as exercised at Corinth differed from that of Pentecost, although even there the comment of the ribald crowd points to a wordless utterance, were it not clear from the Apostle's concluding instructions that to one equally uplifted and in tune with the speaker these sounds otherwise without meaning were capable of interpretation. As it is, we have a clear example of an instinctive and unconscious activity which is yet capable under certain conditions of being given conscious expression and so of becoming intuitive.<sup>2</sup>

But even so the gift of tongues, like the somewhat similar outbursts which have accompanied tense religious feeling on other occasions, remains rather a sign for unbelievers; and its value is secondary to that of prophecy. The work of the prophet as teacher and preacher, champion of the new faith and guide of the faithful, has been included among the fruits of the Spirit already summarised, save for one, and that its most striking feature, the prophetic ecstasy or apocalypse. This as recorded by St. Paul, both of himself and in his directions to the Corinthian Church,

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. xiv, 14 and 2.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. "*L'Évolution Créatrice*" (Eng. tr. p. 186), pp. 191, 192.

seems to have taken the form of a trance or vision, such as St. Peter saw on the roof at Joppa. How far it was an essential part of the prophet's function is not very clear. From the Corinthian epistle<sup>1</sup> it would appear that the prophets at their sessions were used to submit experiences of this kind to criticism, it being provided that if any of their number became entranced during the meeting silence should be kept for him. Yet St. Paul elsewhere speaks of himself in terms appropriate to his prophetic office when he is giving practical instructions, and when there is no question of special ecstasy. And if we may judge by the stress which he lays on the rapture into the third heaven—"whether in the body, I know not, or whether out of the body"<sup>2</sup>—such apocalypses were of rare occurrence, and certainly not an essential accompaniment of the prophet's task. From the narrative of the Acts, as well as from the modest tone of the passage just cited, it is evident that the Apostle derived much help and guidance in moments of crisis from such visions. But even so, save for the one specific case, it is not easy to determine whether these were of the nature of trances or of dreams ; perhaps the distinction between them is not very clear. At least we may safely conclude that in this as in the speaking with tongues the work of the Holy Spirit was reflected in a quickening of the subconscious personality and an increase of psychic sensitiveness, the results of which in the former case were capable of interpretation by the prophet himself in terms of intellectual

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. xiv, 29-32. So too I Thess. v, 19-22.

<sup>2</sup> II Cor. xii, 2.

consciousness, but in the latter were only understood by those in a similar state of spiritual exaltation, and able to translate instinct into terms of concepts. That the utterance of ecstasy must not be accepted without caution, and that the exercise of the gift must be safeguarded from possible abuses arising either from self-deception or from misinterpretation, is shown by the careful directions as to the "proving of spirits." "The spirits of the prophets are under the control of the prophets" is a warning at once to them and to their hearers. The Didache shows us how necessary such warning might become.

For the corporate aspect of the Spirit's work St. Paul is again our clearest guide. If in the individual He mainly appears as the Spirit of Truth, in the society He reveals Himself rather as the Spirit of Fellowship or Love. We have seen how from their experience of the gift of tongues believers could learn that they were in a very special sense in tune or at one with one another; and St. Paul in his great conception of the one body and one Spirit has given this unity an abiding expression. Again and again he exhorts his converts to regard themselves not merely as isolated units struggling separately for life in God, but as members of one great organism, whose life subsists sacramentally, deriving its inward grace from the spirits of them all, inspired, directed, unified by the Spirit of God and displaying its outward sign in the ordered system of the visible Church. It is indeed his unfailing sense of the oneness of all believers and of their duty as members one of another that gives St. Paul's teaching not only

its majesty and breadth but its sanity and practicality. He had inherited with his Jewish blood an intensely individual longing for righteousness, and in his own experience he had learned the supreme value of each single soul and the lonely conflict which that soul must wage with sin. But from his heritage he had drawn also the concept, always present in the best Hebrew thought, of the corporate oneness of Israel, of the community alike of privilege and of burden, of the share which each must take in the responsibility that rests upon all. And this it is that saves him from the terrors of morbid self-analysis and the hopelessness of self-centred efforts. He has taken the Jewish ideal of a holy nation, a peculiar people, has stretched it to a world-wide stature, and can use conformity to it as a decisive test in all problems, whether they concern the whole future of the universal Church, or the small details of domestic behaviour. The petty difficulties over the use of food or the conduct of slaves are judged as rigorously and as lucidly as grave questions like the relative value of spiritual gifts or the most convenient method of ecclesiastical government. Each is solved in the light of its relation to the pre-eminent need, the well-being of the one body, and its ability to conform to and express the known will of the one Spirit. It is this instinctive certainty of the vital oneness of all believers, this ready sympathy reflecting and responding to every need of the communal soul, that enables him to steer clear of the sophistries and prejudice of his intellect, to shape his course with an intuition that only falters when he is entrapped in the bypaths of debate, or when, by

condescending to be merely clever, he distracts for an instant the compass-needle of his spirit.

If we are to be faithful interpreters of the New Testament teaching, we cannot close our survey of the works of the Spirit without returning to the point from which we started. When we think of spiritual gifts, of heightened psychic power and developed corporate consciousness, there is a danger, as St. Paul saw and taught, of neglecting the essentially ethical basis of it all. Just as he begins his treatise upon spiritual gifts by the eulogy upon love, so we must never allow ourselves to forget that the condition upon which men may see God is that they be pure in heart. At a time when there is almost universal interest in spiritual and psychic phenomena, there is a real danger of associating sympathy rather with the possession of mesmeric or mediumistic faculties than with those fruits of conduct which alone give us any test of its worth. Most mystics, from Plotinus onwards, have joined hands with Christ and His Apostles in insisting not only upon definite moral discipline, but also upon an attitude of mind at once humble and ready to receive, and also loving, trustful and hopeful. And surely the very gifts which we have been noting as the works of the Spirit, a fuller intuition and a richer sympathy, are but the two constituents of Love, and cannot come to those whose lives are earth-bound by vices, or self-imprisoned by pride. At least it seemed so to St. Paul, as over and over again he tests the gifts of his flock by their value for edification, for the building up of the body in love, as he proclaims unhesitatingly that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy,

peace,\*long suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-restraint." Spirit and Holiness may differ in the sphere in which they are revealed; in their essence they are the same and inseparable. We emphasise their oneness when we profess our faith in the Holy Ghost.

And so we are led from the works of the Spirit to the concept of His person as it is unfolded to us in the pages of Holy Writ. Clearly and more clearly as the records proceed we have the deepening realisation of the divine immanence of a Being not man but working in man; a force of movement and inspiration, a wind blowing where it listeth, a Word spoken by God to the prophet and through him to the world; and yet more, as we reach the fuller revelation in St. Paul and the fourth Gospel, no mere force, but a person infinitely close to us, sustaining, prompting, enlightening, unifying, uplifting humanity until it is brought into vital relationship with God, when selfishness isolates us no longer, and we offer ourselves wholly to the service of the one body and the expression of the one will. It is a conception of the Holy Spirit as that impulse towards righteousness which from the time when first the waters emerged from chaos has brooded over this world of ours, working for betterment in all that lives, as through the ages were evolved fresh and ever fresh complexities of form, inspiring man's earliest glimpses after beauty and truth and goodness, guiding him still more clearly as he became more conscious of higher things, more responsive to His promptings, and finally revealed in all richness in the Incarnate, and by Him sent forth on a far more splendid



mission,<sup>1</sup> when a new race, following the unique example and transformed into the very nature of Jesus, received the full gift of adoption as children of the Father and were freed from the shackles of their lonely servitude into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. There put in its briefest form, is the drama of the Holy Ghost as it appears to us in Scripture<sup>2</sup>—a drama the climax of which was reached at Pentecost, though the full ingathering of the harvest then sown is not yet.

It is hardly necessary after such a survey of the work and person of the Holy Spirit to emphasise the remarkable parallelism between our account and Bergson's philosophy of evolution. Like the Spirit, his *élan de vie* ever makes for betterment, manifests itself in instinctive and direct action, gives unity and solidarity to all that lives, insinuates itself into, and adapts itself to the conditions of, materiality, in order to overcome its opposition and impose upon it the impulse towards life. We claim that without violating the teaching of Scripture and the Church we have traced in Christian doctrine all the main features of modern Immanentism, have discovered the new in the old. There remain certain questions which may arise and must be met, if our claim is to be substantiated.

<sup>1</sup> How conscious of the grandeur of the new impulse were the early believers may be judged from John vii, 39. It is the immensity of the change wrought by the Incarnation that justifies the Western Church in its confession of the "double procession."

<sup>2</sup> Nowhere is this theology of evolution more finely developed than by the Greek Fathers of the second and third centuries in their doctrine of the Logos.

We have to consider how this conception of a Spirit which struggles for us and in us with groanings unuttered, which inspires whatever is lovely in the individual, which incorporates him into a union with all those who obey the common influence, can be reconciled with our doctrine of God. If we ascribe to, or describe as, the work of the Spirit the whole immanent functioning of the divine in the world, excepting only that of the special Incarnation of the Son in the person of Jesus Christ, have we any right to call this Christianity, any room for God the Father Almighty, any possibility of reconciling it with the doctrine of the Trinity ?

In the first place, is a doctrine of the Spirit which Mr. Britling could have accepted in any sense unchristian ? Does it give us a concept of Godhead incompatible with that revealed in Jesus ? Here, despite Mr. Wells's misconceptions and evasions, the answer seems clear enough. For the work of the Spirit as it appears in Scripture and in experience is to bring men individually to that intuitive grasp upon life, that moral freedom and mastery over evil, which can only be found when the self is lost in the service of a larger whole, and socially to knit them together into one body in the bonds of a sympathy based upon common and complete sacrifice. And the meaning of this is love, and its symbol is the Cross. In the life of Jesus alone we have the perfect type of that which the age-long travail of the race is labouring to bring forth. At His baptism we read that the Spirit descended upon Him, confirming in Him the instinctive knowledge of His person and calling, and

thence drove Him to His testing in the wilderness, when He broke once and for all the fetters of the ideals of comfort and power and popularity that enslave us others. There was the individual triumph. Thereafter His life illustrates by word and action the social work of the Spirit. As perfect Man He preaches that whoso loseth his life findeth it, or that His mission is not to be ministered unto but to minister : He reveals that the power of selfless love is mighty to cure the ills of body or spirit : He dies, and in the utter surrender of Calvary provides the one incentive, the one method, the one guarantee, whereby men can be led to God : He rises, and by that final demonstration shows that love such as His is eternal, the attribute of God Himself. Indeed, if we did not accept the Christian dogmatic, we should find it hard to select a more appropriate name than " the Spirit of Jesus " for this " Struggling God," whose efforts, writ so large over the history of humanity that our eyes can see but a fraction of the record, are reproduced in miniature in the microcosm of that life which has always been recognised as " representative " of all that is highest in all men, as possessed of an " inclusive " humanity, as that " image of the invisible God " after which we men are fashioned. If Jesus was what we claim Him to be when we call Him Son of God, then this quality of parallelism between Him and the Spirit of the Universe is natural, nay, inevitable. If not, it remains a coincidence which cannot be lightly set aside.

But if our claim can be harmonised with belief in Christ, does it not conflict hopelessly with the first article of our Creed ? Mr. Wells repudiates all belief

in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth ; and we may well ask whether faith in a God that struggles along with us does not involve us in a similar denial. To answer such a question fully, or indeed at all, is to plunge into metaphysics ; and in the present essay I am most unwilling to be led into the matter. But, nevertheless, I cannot but feel that from a commonsense point of view Mr. Britling is not entitled to shelve as easily as he does the old question of the First Cause. Vague talk about " Nature and Necessity " or a " Veiled Being," whether it conceals a complete refusal to speculate upon the purpose of the universe or a Manichean belief that the world is dark and evil, is far more unsatisfactory and objectionable than orthodox Christianity ; for the latter, even if its dogmas have sometimes been stated too positively and emphatically, does at least make an honest attempt to satisfy our innate curiosity and " to grasp this sorry scheme of things entire." We deplore, as much as any, the misplaced stress which often seems to exaggerate speculation to the detriment of religion, to substitute metaphysics for experience, and in consequence to interpret Jesus in terms of the Absolute rather than God in terms of Jesus. We must be humble and keep a sense of proportion in our search for truth. But this is vastly different from the refusal to enquire, from the cowardice which denies man's ability to investigate and disregards his instinct for finality. No real religion can be content to accept so drastic a restriction upon its scope ; its philosophy must be co-extensive with the fullest limits of the knowable. Nor does Bergson, though his thought is far deeper

and more consistent, wholly satisfy us. Granted that Life which is Spirit is a movement ever meeting, ever striving with, the contrary movement of matter which is relative necessity, there remain the unanswered questions, How did these movements arise, and what motive has set them in collision? If they are to be explained as well as described, must not this motive be outside the natural order? Here again religion cannot rest upon the mere flux of things, but must at the risk of paradox find room for the divine transcendence which in moments of ecstasy we can apprehend and upon which alone we can base our hope securely. Granted that the first article in our Creed is no unworthy description of this sphere of God's existence and that it gives a sense of purpose and a pledge to us in our outlook upon the universe, it does not follow that we need reject at once our concept of the Holy Spirit. Surely there is still room here for the familiar Christian belief, which though perhaps inadequate is not less so than any other cosmogony. Let us examine it as briefly and simply as we can.

Most of us, with our habit of exaggerating antitheses, conceive of God in His relation to the world under one of two forms. Either He is power, or He is love. The former comes to us supported by a very strong body of commendation. Creeds and Prayer-book alike have made Almighty the most familiar attribute of the Deity. Yet if this attribute is characteristic of Him always and everywhere, it seems more than doubtful whether He can be in any real sense "our Father." Surely, unless there be some self-limitation of the

divine omnipotence, we shall be slaves, nay, mere machines, not sons. There will be no meaning for us in the spirit of adoption and the spirit of liberty, no escape from blind grovelling, if nothing exists save God, or if God while seeming to create does so solely for the exercise of His might without moral purpose and without the possibility of mutual relationship between Himself and His creatures. Creation is a misnomer to the pantheist as it is a mockery to the determinist; for it has no real existence in itself, but is either the transient form assumed by the divine life or the dead stuff upon which God works His will. In either case our freedom and selfhood are an illusion. Power, if it be taken as the primary quality of deity, must needs give us at best the concept of a beneficent despot, one in whom mercy can only temper justice by introducing inconsistency, whose heart is continually being represented as better than His head, but who, without such inconsistency, is intolerable to the conscience and unworthy of the homage of humanity. Such a doctrine has indeed been accepted by a few of the more extreme Calvinists: it is scarcely possible for a Christian—or perhaps for any normal person. Nevertheless, popular religion is far too often driven by its desire to safeguard divine omnipotence into regarding divine compassion as a kind of amiable weakness, or at least as a work of supererogation in God; and to this cause is perhaps due the emphasis so frequently laid upon sin and punishment and “the fear of the Lord” at the expense of the fruits of the Spirit. One of the greatest needs of our time is to escape from an idea of God which is neither in



history specifically associated with the religion of Jesus Christ nor in experience capable of winning the loyal devotion of mankind.<sup>1</sup>

If on the other hand we follow the teaching of our Lord and of the fourth Evangelist and think of God in terms of love, then it is obvious that His power must be in some degree abrogated or conditioned. For love implies relationship, and relationship necessitates objectivity, so that when God calls into existence an object other than Himself He does thereby and to that extent lay aside His power. Love is possible only between persons : He cannot love us if we are automata or puppets incapable of independence ; and the gift of freedom can only be bestowed by Him at the cost of His own self-sacrifice and self-curtailement. May we not truly say that if the very essence of the Godhead is love, then it is in the self-sacrifice involved in the creation of free spirits that His nature finds its fulfilment ; that the impulse to create, to give out from Himself, is a necessary condition of His life ; and that this world of ours is the product and scene of just such an impulse.

A parallel may make this clearer. In creation as in Incarnation there is a self-limiting of the divine. In the latter, though we may speak of the Kenosis as an act, yet it was an act which conditioned the whole method of the divine revelation through Jesus, so that throughout the Incarnate life the Godhead manifested

<sup>1</sup> Of the verdict of history I have given a fuller account in my book "What Think Ye of Christ?" pp. 54-63. For that of experience "Thoughts on Religion at the Front," by Neville S. Talbot, supplies abundant evidence.

itself under the full restrictions of humanity, and Jesus wins the world, not from outside it by the exercise of a master's constraint, but from within by the methods of a friend, refusing to deprive us of our right to reject and to crucify. Even so, in the former this self-limitation of God will involve all the scope of the creative activity under conditions of immanence. For if His creatures are to be truly objective to Him, if they are to be such that between Him and them can exist Love's relationship, then they cannot be under the control of His power. He must act upon them under the guise of Paraclete, not of despot : He must struggle and suffer with them, strive and yearn to win them with a passion of which the joys and fears of earthly parenthood are perhaps a faint reflection. To win them by constraint will be to revoke the gift of liberty. Jesus regarded such a use of power as equivalent to a worshipping of Satan. His example is a revelation in this as elsewhere of the very life and nature of God.<sup>1</sup>

Put still more crudely, what I suggest is this. God has brought this world into being not as a marionette-show, but as a training ground for free souls. Sin with its consequences would be meaningless if we were puppets, but it is inevitably implied in freedom of choice. Though to the individual victim sin is among the most positive facts of his experience (and if he is to overcome he must never dare to treat it as less than this), yet from the general point of view it remains

<sup>1</sup> Unless the character and method of our Lord faithfully reveal the nature of God and the quality of His working in the world, there cannot have been in any true sense an Incarnation—a point often missed both by the advocates and the opponents of Kenotic theories.

only the necessary companion of progress, a wrong choice, a failure to rise in the scale of being, a thwarting of God's plan, a disaster none the less real because its possibility is contemplated as a condition of the scheme. Regarded individually from the point of view of any one of us myriad units, the whole represents a picture of countless solitary contests in a great struggle for existence—a struggle in which the unit always seems to fail. Regarded collectively, if our eyes can but see it so, there appears behind all the struggle a slow but steady progress, a growth so slight that sometimes it seems to stop, so gradual that we seldom become conscious of change, yet so sure that even in our failures we cannot truly gainsay it or despair. God cannot break His own laws for us, cannot hasten the working of His plan except with our consent. His Holy Spirit bestowed upon each, incarnate in all, moves onward and upward and shall move, until through the night of its agony, through the anguish of its cross, humanity comes at last to the reality of its freedom and stands complete in the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ. And in that Holy Spirit, I, for all my sin, by reason of my birthright in God's image, am potentially at least a partaker;<sup>1</sup> and through my very failures if I use them aright I shall be taught more and more fully to derive the springs of my being not from my own fountain but from this river of life, to the flood-tide of which it should be my joy to respond.

Finally, then, if we can by some such crude picturing indicate how God, whom as the infinite Source or Father

<sup>1</sup> Swete, "The Holy Spirit in the New Testament," p. 343, seems hardly justified in limiting this to the baptized.

we are taught to call Almighty, can reveal Himself as the Paraclete striving alongside us, and supplying us alike with the sense of organic fellowship and with the inspiration to high resolve, how can we render the position of this Holy Ghost in the divine Trinity ?

We are not concerned in this Essay with the essential as opposed to the economic nature of the Godhead. To inquire into that would need an excursion into the realm of pure abstraction, and, as I have already confessed, my mind is not comfortable in that rarefied atmosphere. It will be sufficient here to draw attention simply to the moral unity of the three aspects under which the divine is revealed to us. For in thinking of the Holy Ghost we must never forget that He is indeed the Spirit of Holiness—that Spirit through His conformity with which Jesus was proclaimed Son of God, that Spirit which belongs of right to Him who has ever been known as a “Holy God.” It is in the community of the divine attributes as they are displayed in the different spheres of their manifestation that we get an indication of the truth of the three hypostases in one essence. Each sphere shows us a revelation of love, of a perpetual movement onward, a perpetual self-giving ; and it is this quality which distinguishes the Christian concept of Godhead from all others that have been formulated in history. How far if we could eliminate the thought of the world and contemplate deity *in vacuo*, as the early theologians would have us do, this Trinitarianism would be possible may be doubted. Certainly we must attack the problem on other lines if it is necessary for us to get beyond an economic concept. But none the less, if

God is love, some sphere of revelation must be a necessary condition of the divine nature; so that perhaps the distinction between economic and essential is not so rigid as might be supposed. In any case for religion and for us men it is with God as He reveals Himself that we are concerned.

This is all

We know on earth and all we need to know.

Can we sum it up in an illustration?

Probably Bergson's metaphor,<sup>1</sup> if we may vary his interpretation of it, gives us the truth as fully as any, when he says that life, which is really one—superb picture flung in a rapture of creative impulse upon the canvas of the material world, yet appears to us as a mosaic of which we are the pieces, a mosaic apparently fitted together with the uttermost toil and only after the most laborious collection and perfecting of the separate fragments, a mosaic so vast that we cannot grasp its meaning, so elaborate that we cannot credit the spasm of creative energy which called it into being. May we not venture to interpret the parable into the language of theology and say that the artist's will which purposes to create the picture and the impulse which prepares pigments and canvas is God the Father; that the artist's concept of the complete picture, his cartoon of the grand design on which the work is modelled, is God the Son; that the artist's energy, the vital and creative activity whereby is produced upon the canvas of matter the perfect image which the will has planned and the vision conceived,

<sup>1</sup> "L'Évolution Créatrice," pp. 97 *seq.*

is God the Holy Ghost ? And these three, separate in sphere and method, representing separate functions of the artist's personality, are yet one. "And in this Trinity none is afore or after another ; none is greater or less than another ; but the whole three Persons are co-eternal together, and co-equal."

It is in this full recognition of the Holy Spirit as the source and inspiration of all that makes for righteousness on earth that Christians may hope to escape from formalism and narrowness, and secure a broad base and a sound criterion for the work of reconstruction. The old safeguards, the old authorities, alike in Church and State have lost their sanction. Only the sovereignty of the corporate conscience remains to guide us from the darkness to the new day. It is natural that men's hearts should fail them and that they should yearn in their bewilderment for the security which convention and tradition seem to offer. Yet indeed there is small need for cowardice. This war, which has so signally displayed the hollowness and unreality of much that passed for religion, has at least shown us beyond dispute how closely akin is the conscience of mankind to that mind which was in Christ Jesus : it has been indeed the "*testimonium animae naturaliter Christianae*." The Cross was never more signally vindicated than when all that was best in humanity accepted the gospel of sacrifice and set itself to atone by its blood for the martyrdom of the weak. The fruits of the Spirit which St. Paul has enumerated were never more universally approved and desired than in this hour when our failure to attain them is most manifest. If only the Church could have the



courage to proclaim with her lips and the power to demonstrate in her life that where these fruits are there is the spirit of her Master, and that apart from loyalty to Him in whom alone that Spirit has found its expression these fruits will never be fully gained, she could even now win back the love and loyalty of men, and lead the nations from their dreary exile to the Zion of their heart's desire. Only she must dare to be free, to test all things by their conformity with the Spirit of Holiness and by no smaller standards, to make the imitation of Christ the only orthodoxy, to show herself large enough and loving enough to claim for the service of her Lord all men of good will, and to think upon and seek after whatsoever things are true, and honest, and pure, and lovely, and of good report. Men are ready everywhere to recognise and confess the attractiveness of Jesus. They find in Him more readily than ever the very incarnation of that sacrifice which they are being taught to adore. If they could only be convinced, not by words but by actions, that it was the Spirit of Jesus and that alone which created and sustained His Church, if they could recognise in her the marks of His redemption, love, joy, peace, then truly the inspired dreams of prophets and saints would be fulfilled and the kingdoms of the world would become in deed and in fact the kingdom of our God and of His Christ.

And for the individual there is no plainer guide than to follow and make his own the experience which St. Paul has interpreted with such searching intuition in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Each one of us needs to learn so to love Jesus, so to

be filled with His Spirit, that the conventions of this world and the traditions of the past may cease to enthrall us, that the "spirit of life in Jesus Christ may make us free from the law of sin and death." And having won this liberty, if we use it largely and bravely, if we dare to recognise that to live is to be righteous that the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of Holiness, then we shall be able to control and guide our individual consciences in harmony with that corporate consciousness which unites us not only with the Godhead but with our fellow men, and shall find that "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and if children then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him that we may be also glorified together."

It is perhaps worth while to add a few words as to the bearing of this essay upon the spirit to which the war has given birth. However small may be the tangible effects hitherto apparent among those at home, the whole atmosphere of life in France and especially at the battle-front is so completely unlike that of our normal life that the effect of a sojourn in it cannot but be great and may well be revolutionary. To a new-comer the change is so marked that he seems to have found a new world, to have passed into another incarnation. His previous existence takes on a dim pre-natal character by comparison with the apocalyptic experiences of war. He lives from day to day under the stress of strange and often terrible happenings. His physical and emotional nature is strained almost

to the breaking-point ; his mind sleeps. He becomes more and more a creature of impulse and instinct. That which is real and elemental in him endures, the disguises with which education and convention have overlaid his soul slip off and leave him naked. The old fetters, the old restraints, no longer bind him. The chaff of hearsay belief or lightly-held opinion is being winnowed away. He has come to a judgment-day, and the secrets of his heart are revealed.

For the student of religion to find himself in such an atmosphere is indeed a revelation ; and for the cleric who by reason of his calling has come to be regarded by his fellows either with exaggerated reverence or with ill-concealed contempt, the revelation is apt to be startling : it is an admission into the palace of truth. Hopes formed in the sheltered vicarage are blighted in an instant, dreams cherished in academic seclusion are dissipated into vapour, shrines erected by prejudice upon the sands of desire fall shattered to earth. And yet there is uncovered before his eyes that ancient rock, that basal manhood of which Cephas was the type ; and upon it if we are humble and brave and strong to make a fresh start we may once more raise up a temple to our God and to His Christ. For the Churchman the apocalypse is full of menace and may bring him near despair ; yet if his Christianity be stronger than his Churchmanship there are abundant grounds for hope.

What then are the characteristics of the manhood thus unveiled before the visitor to the war-zone, the manhood which the passage of centuries has created in this race of ours ?

The fact about it that must first strike the least impressionable observer is its genius for comradeship. In our isolated individualist lives at home it is amazingly hard to believe that man is a gregarious animal : here the reality of mass consciousness with its present fruits of mutual forbearance and mutual fellowship is evident as soon as the Channel is crossed. However uncongenial the new-comer, he will find an immediate welcome and a large charity. However dissimilar the tastes and incongruous the character of his new friends, he will find them living together in daily intimacy without quarrels and almost without friction. Men of all ranks are amazingly generous in allowing for the peculiarities and adapting themselves to the angles of their comrades. In every unit is developed a sense of membership, of corporate soul, so evident and so vivid that the weakest can stay himself without fear upon its support, and the strongest dare not set up his own will against it. Pacifists and Conscientious Objectors may talk of the sanctity of human brotherhood ; we out here have discovered something at least of its reality. "Members one of another" is no longer a mere phrase to us. Of us as of the earliest Church it might be written that "the multitude of them were of one heart and of one soul : neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own ; but they had all things common." <sup>1</sup>

The second notable feature of our life is its gay and irrepressible hope. In common with most fresh arrivals I had thought to find at the Front a certain

<sup>1</sup> The private soldier calls it tersely, "mucking in."

grimness, a never-absent consciousness of the close presence of death, an utter lack of normal as opposed to hysterical confidence. Despite journalistic emphasis upon the cheerfulness of our troops, I had expected a death-bed atmosphere such as broods over many households at home. At best I felt that such cheerfulness would have about it the forced joviality of the condemned cell, that it would be hollow and unreal, a cheerfulness more pathetic than tears. To some extent, on the eve of an attack for instance, it is true that the gaiety is transparently artificial: men dare not in loyalty to the corporate soul let themselves go, they must combine to enact a farce where each separately would choose a tragedy. But apart from these spasmodic affectations (God, how gallantly the lads play out their parts!) there is an underlying hopefulness of a wholly different kind—a hopefulness which is, I believe, due to the fact that each one of us has at some time and once for all passed through the terror of his Gethsemane, has looked death fairly in the face and felt the cold blast turn his blood to ice, and having counted the cost and learnt to know the worst can henceforward go on his way with a clear eye and a stalwart spirit. Certainly it is almost universal, this hope of a good time coming. Over and over again, in nearly every one of the thousands of letters which it has been my privilege to censor, such hope is expressed. Generally its fulfilment is expected in that vague heaven of the fighting man, the days after the war. Very often it is focussed upon the happy land which to those under the hourly possibility of death seems hardly more remote. Quite naturally

men come to accept and express a confidence in the hereafter, a conviction that this life is not the end, that there remaineth somewhere, somewhen, a rest and a reunion.

Much less noticeable or obtrusive is a third quality which will probably at first surprise the new-comer by its apparent absence, but which on closer acquaintance is readily discoverable and serves to explain the other two. To anyone fresh from the fulsome phrases of preachers or politicians the lack of all talk of sacrifice here at the Front will come as a shock. The average soldier does not bother much about the rights and wrongs of the cause for which he may be called to die. He grumbles in lurid language of the hourly nuisances and discomforts to which he is exposed. He curses the war and all its ways, declaring himself ready to-morrow for a peace at any price. He leaves all the talk about liberty and righteousness, humanity and civilisation, to the speechifiers and journalists, only wishing that they would come out here and go up the line a bit instead of talking. But at the back of it all, too vaguely grasped to be articulate, too sacred to be discussed, is the consciousness that he is in the right place, that he couldn't be elsewhere, that come what may he must do his bit, and that in doing it he is finding a curious, an unexpected and a wholly unacknowledged joy. He realises that a power larger than himself has summoned him to an act of self-denial, to a great adventure, and that in obeying the call he has not only laid down his life but has also in some strange sense found it. He has without knowing it and perhaps for the first time conformed to the law



of sacrifice, to the ethic of Calvary, and in doing so has vindicated once more the triumph of the Galilean.

Sacrifice, brotherhood, hope—those three are surely no bad summary of the gospel of Jesus. An atmosphere permeated by them would reproduce in these days of ours the quality of the apostolic age. He whose kingdom came once with just such an environment must surely be at home here among us, and enthroned in our hearts. To the Christian that would seem the inevitable climax : Jesus must be the central figure for whom is prepared this stage and setting. We look for the lineaments made familiar to us in song and story. We search wistfully along the ways whereupon tradition assures us that He is to be found. We long to see Him come as we have expected Him, to hear the chorus of acclaim and confession arise from the hearts of His people, to catch at least a murmur that shall herald His approach. In such surroundings, when men are everywhere revealing the splendours of His Spirit, we look to find His love in their hearts, His name upon their lips. And we look in vain.

For it must be stated quite definitely that the fruits of so eminently Christian an atmosphere are not to be seen in any revival or any approach to a revival of orthodox Christianity. The men who were churchgoers at home keep up the habit ; and in times of special danger others usually more lax swell their ranks. A few more are drawn in through curiosity, especially if the services are hearty and full of hymn-singing and if the “ padre ” is a man or has a gift of straight speech. In fact, conditions are very like what they are at home ; we attract the same types here as there,

and we do so by similar though more elastic methods and for the same reasons.

Yet among the masses of men who are living most of them far cleaner lives than they would do normally,<sup>1</sup> and whose spirit is so close to that of Christ, there seems no tendency at all to find in Him the inspiration or explanation of their lives. By the fruits of the Spirit they are clearly marked as His disciples ; and yet it never dawns upon them to think of themselves in that light, or to draw nearer to the Church which professes to incorporate and transmit the very qualities which they are learning to display and to value.

There is, I believe, very little hostility. Parade services, which men in training at home usually loathe, are out here welcomed in most units, if only as a change and a reminder of home ties. Men who pray are not, to my knowledge, exposed to contempt or anything but the mildest banter. It is of the essence of our fellowship to make allowances for such idiosyncrasies. But none the less the mass is wholly untouched. They are fatalists, or else believers in such a God as Jehovah, not Christians. Why not ?

It may well be largely the fault of our preaching, that we lack that fire of devotion or at least that power of kindling other souls which might sweep men away in a consuming flame of loyalty to Jesus Christ. The feebleness which was so distressingly shown in the National Mission in England no doubt limits and invalidates our efforts here. We have not yet repented ; we are not yet full of the Holy Ghost and of power.

<sup>1</sup> This is true of the men in the trenches, though not, I am afraid, of those in the back areas.

We are still trying to stand in our own strength, not in that of Christ. That, no doubt, is one cause. I wish it were the only one.

But it may also be, and I am afraid that it is, the case that our Church's conception of Christianity has through the ages developed into something alien to the soil of the New Testament, that we have somehow lost the power to act as sowers of the Lord's harvest. That is the conclusion which is being forced upon many of us out here by the ruthless logic of facts. We have in the lives of men a garden of the Lord tilled by the iron of sacrifice, and watered with the blood and tears of war : we have striven as best we can to plant in it the seeds of grace in this wonderful seed-time : yet we see few signs of growth, small promise of blossom or of fruitage. We dare not relax our efforts, we will not cease from our penitence ; but our hearts are stricken with a doubt, and the doubt is hardening into a conviction, that there is something radically wrong either with the seed that we are trying to sow or, if not, with the system and methods of our husbandry. We are full of dread lest this great opportunity be lost and the good ground go unharvested, or, since God is strong to bring every good work to its fulfilment, lest the joy of the fellow-worker with Him be taken from us, and we and our Church suffer the fate of Israel and be rejected. The day of the Lord is at hand : who may abide His appearing ?

For this new outpouring of the Holy Spirit must needs find some appropriate expression : somewhere even now fresh wine-skins are being made ready.

Roman Catholicism has unquestionably received a strong impulse from the war among our troops in France : men attend Mass regularly, and the churches and chapels in villages behind the line are freely visited for private prayer, and many non-Catholics are notably impressed. Nonconformity, whose chaplains are working under great difficulties, is not very conspicuous at the actual front, but through the Y.M.C.A. has become familiar to the troops at the bases and rest-camps, and by its devotion to their practical bodily needs is opening up many lines of future activity, and may contribute much to a great pan-Protestant movement. Yet neither of these has as yet attracted to itself any large number of those whose outlook has been altered by the war, and it seems only too probable that the new spirit will find its expression outside the organised Churches in a gospel of social service and a generalised and non-dogmatic theism, unless we of the Church of England whose position is so eminently fitted for the starting of a great Christian revival rise to the full measure of our opportunity. May God, who has never left Himself without a witness, find us worthy of our calling in this great day.

VII

THE CHURCH AND MORALITY

BY A. CLUTTON-BROCK

*Author of "Thoughts on the War," "The Ultimate Belief," "William Morris : his Work and Influence" (Home University Library).*

## SYNOPSIS

Different uses of the word morality.

A common morality is necessary, but it is always a second best.

Religion and the Church must never be the slaves of morality.

The religious conception of goodness differs from the merely moral conception.

The function of the Church is to supersede morality with the sense of God.

So the Church must not have a rival morality, or rival laws, of its own.

The present inconsistency of churches. They are hampered by their own past law-making. They imitate the State.

The State knows that its laws are subject to change. But the churches make laws and say they are not subject to change. So their laws are often inferior to those of the State.

The Church should not punish, and needs no laws.

But the Church must maintain discipline over its officers.

The limits of discipline in matters of conduct and of dogma.

The relation of the Church to war. The present nationalism of all churches is irreligious.

The inconsistency of churches with regard to war and civil conflict.

How are they to escape from this inconsistency ?

The logic of the Church should preserve it from all imitation of the State. For it is the logic of God.



## THE CHURCH AND MORALITY

THE word morality has different meanings for different people, and sometimes for the same writer in different sentences, so that he perplexes himself and his readers with his use of it. We may speak of morality in the abstract, as when we contrast it with immorality; or we may speak of the morality of a particular body, of a class or a nation or a whole society. In the latter case, the word has much of its original meaning of custom. There must be custom in the morality of any large body of men. It is what they all agree to be right rather than the expression of each individual conscience; and this agreement may be more or less forced upon individuals, first in conduct and then in thought. Their consciences may be overawed by the common consent or the appearance of it, so that they will do what seems to them wrong, until, by doing it, they persuade themselves that it is right.

Yet this common morality, though it may justify the worst cruelties and iniquities, is never merely custom, like the rule of the road. It does not exist only because it is convenient for men all to think and act in the same way. It has its origin in the consciences of individual men, but it is a compromise between the

differences in their consciences, and a compromise not merely for convenience. A common morality is necessary because we are not born with a fully developed individual morality of our own. We have to learn the craft, even the moral craft, of life ; our moral sense must learn to express itself, and to develop itself in that expression, through certain rules of conduct. Because we are alive, we grow in all things ; and we may grow rightly or wrongly in mind as in body. We are not born so that we are sure to act rightly in any sudden emergency ; we must be trained to act rightly and to acquire habits of right action ; and this training must be in a common morality just as the training of any individual craftsman must be according to the common practice of his craft. It is only the master craftsman who rises above that common practice ; and we are not born master craftsmen in anything, least of all in the conduct of life. Those who rail most against common morality do so only because they wish to substitute another common morality for it. We cannot do without a common morality any more than craftsmen can do without a training. We are all apprentices at first, and many remain apprentices all their lives, needing rules which they must obey so that they may not fall into bad habits and be a nuisance to themselves and to society.

But we need also to be aware that no rules of conduct are absolute, except for our own weakness. In heaven there would be no rules ; and it is possible to imagine circumstances in which it would be right to break any conceivable rule of conduct on earth. This fact must always be for us a real fact ; for otherwise our morality

becomes frozen. The rule is a *pis-aller* which we need to impose on ourselves, but not on others. If we break the rule, we know why we break it ; but we do not know for certain why others break it ; and so we are not to judge their breaches of it. It is the judging of others which freezes morality and makes it most tyrannous where it is least moral. There is something in the morality of all nations that seems immoral to other nations, and the more immoral because it is a part of their morality. Our English hypocrisy, for instance, is so repulsive to foreigners because it is part of our morality, because we think we do right when we deceive ourselves ; and Christ denounced the Pharisees more than ordinary sinners because they did wrong when they thought they were doing right. Morality, in fact, is kept alive, is turned from a tyrant into a constitutional monarch, by the protests of the individual conscience against it. For those protests, when they are just and when they are boldly made and patiently endured, become themselves part of morality and prevent it from becoming immoral. But when morality is not quickened by these protests, it causes the worst of all crimes and iniquities. Breaches of the universal moral law, such as drunkenness, theft or fornication, have not caused a hundredth part of the suffering that has been caused by perverse morality, by religious persecution, by fanatical patriotism, by belief in the sacred rights of property. This war is the result of a morality ; the Inquisition was the result of a morality ; the condition of England after the Napoleonic wars was the result of a morality. In all these cases it was morality, not immorality, that shut the gates of mercy on man-

kind. For morality, when perverted, justifies the worst instincts of mankind and removes all inhibitions to the indulgence of them. Immorality does not justify them ; it is shamefaced and more naughty than wicked. The immoral man usually suffers for his sins at once, because he is immoral and the world with its morality punishes him. But a perverse morality is not punished, because it does not punish itself. It is the cause of decay in societies ; but they do not know why they decay, because wrong is to them right ; and it remains for the historian to point the moral.

There is no society so hopeless and helpless as one with a frozen and unquestioned morality. In such a society the very sense of duty may be the chief obstacle to all reform. It may make every citizen a slave to his own family and fearful of all changes lest they should endanger the position of his children in the world. It may keep the poor slavishly content with their poverty and the well-to-do with their joyless mediocrity. It was against this narrow sense of duty that Christ protested, when he told men to leave father and mother and follow him ; when he said, in a phrase which sounds almost brutal, that they were to let the dead bury their dead. All the sanguine and fierce cruelties of the French Revolution were nothing to the miseries that are caused in a single year by submission to a wrong economic state to which all consent from a sense of duty. In such a state the dutiful poor are traitors to their own class and to the hope of the world. The doctrine that they ought to remain hardworking, contented and respectable makes willing slaves of them. Where there is iniquity, discontent is indeed

divine, though it always seems immoral to the contented. This is dangerous doctrine, no doubt ; but it is the doctrine of Christ. He was crucified because He denounced the morality of the Scribes and Pharisees, because He was to them immoral. They did not say to each other—Here is a good man, and we are bad men ; therefore we will kill Him so that we may continue to enjoy ourselves. They said—Here is a blasphemer who deserves death. And He was to them a blasphemer, against their morality and against their religion, which was the slave of their morality. That was why they thought themselves justified in using any craft to compass His destruction. He seemed to them a mere destroyer ; and they felt a genuine moral indignation against Him and the danger with which He threatened all that they held most sacred.

Their religion was the slave of their morality ; but religion, if it is to be real, must not be the slave of morality ; and so the Church, professing to be the Heir of Christ, must not be the slave of morality. Its business is to supply something above morality, above all rules of conduct, namely religion. The relation of the Church to morality should be the relation of religion to morality ; and I will now try to discover more precisely what this relation is.

Morality, that is the common morality of any society, is necessarily content with the second best. It insists upon certain rules of conduct which men must obey for the safety of society ; and, because they are common rules, they are not difficult for most men to obey. Those who disobey them are either below or above the average in self-control, in intelligence, in courage ;

and, in either case, they disobey at their peril. Society, which has made these rules, does not trouble itself much about the reasons why men disobey them. It is concerned mainly to punish disobedience. This it may do, either negatively by its disapproval, or positively by the criminal law ; and, when it punishes, it asks only whether its rules have been broken, not why they have been broken. But religion, if it be true religion, does not ask whether any rules have been broken ; it asks why a man has behaved as he has behaved. Rules do not exist for it, and its concern with the moral rules of society is not to enforce them, but to judge them by its own standards. They are to it always the second best and it aims at the best. It tells a man to obey his own conscience, not the law ; and it trains the conscience, not to obedience of the law, but to the sense and the knowledge of God.

The religious, and especially the Christian, conception of goodness is different from the merely moral conception of goodness, because it is based on certain beliefs with which morality has no necessary concern. A man may be a strong moralist and yet hold that there is nothing absolute in his morality. He may believe that it has been developed by man, like his skill in different crafts, like his government, like all his institutions, in the course of his adaptation to circumstances ; and that further adaptation will produce changes in it ; and he may believe further that there can be nothing in morality except this process of adaptation. Man, according to this view, is learning to be a social animal, putting off his primitive individualism, or his herd instinct, so that he may be stronger and more comfortable in the



world as it is. He is turning slowly from a lonely ape, or a pack animal, into a citizen, because the citizen has a better chance of survival ; and that is morality which makes him more completely a citizen. According to this view, man acquires his morality by a course of experiment, just as he has learnt to produce motor cars and aeroplanes ; and that peculiar emotion which he feels about matters of right and wrong is merely the result of the peculiar importance which morality has for his well-being. Without morality, without the desire to change from a lonely ape, or a pack animal, into a citizen, man would become an obsolete creature and would cease to exist. The moral emotion is his sense of the supreme survival value of morality. It is an illusion, in so far as it leads man to believe that there is any absolute quality in his morality, but a useful illusion because it causes him to accept his morality almost instinctively ; because it gives him an almost physical passion for it, making him, as it were, fall in love with it, transferring some of that energy of feeling and imagination which originally belonged only to his sexual instinct to this still more important and more complex social instinct which also makes for the preservation of the race.

But religion does not explain the moral emotion thus. The value which man expresses in it is not for the survival of the human race, but for God. Religion is religion only when God is a fact to it, a fact like the sun ; and the religious man aims at being more and more aware of God, believing that the sense of righteousness, of truth, of beauty, is always the sense of God, that the peculiar emotions aroused by these are

the answer made by the mind of man to God. In this answer man lives rightly, whether or no he is aware that he is making answer to God ; for he may be aware of God without knowing that it is God he is aware of. God, the fact, affects his mind, just as the sunlight affects his body, except that it is possible for him to refuse the warmth and light of God ; and God is the most important fact in the universe, the fact by which all morality is to be explained and judged.

Man has, or can have, an absolute value for God, which expresses itself in all his absolute values. They are for God, even when he does not know it ; and happiness, right conduct, right feeling, right thought, are all the result of the sense of God ; they are not the result of experiments made by man in the furtherance of his own well-being. The craft which man has to learn in this life is the craft of knowing God ; that is the supreme craft to which all others are subsidiary. Amid all the infinite complexity of the universe as we know it, personality is supreme, the personality of God to which it is the function of all other personality to make answer ; and only in their common answer can men achieve brotherhood and peace and happiness.

I am not concerned now to discuss the truth of either of these views, both of which I have stated very crudely. My concern is with the relation between the religious view and morality ; and so between the Church, which is committed to the religious view, and morality. The Church, holding this religious view, being itself an institution formed to hold this view and to propagate it, finds itself in a constant relation, not necessarily

hostile nor necessarily friendly, with secular morality and with all the institutions designed to uphold it. Secular morality is a fact with which the Church must deal, a fact manifested in a vast number of conventions and rules and customs, and above all in the criminal law. What should be the attitude of the Church towards that fact ?

In practice no Church has ever maintained any consistent attitude. All Churches have considered it their function, partly to support secular morality, partly to supersede it with a higher morality of their own. Everywhere there has been some conflict between the morality of the Church and the morality of the State, because the Church has laid down certain moral rules of its own, which are not exactly the same as the moral rules laid down by the State or by society. The Churches have asserted their right to judge all secular morality by their own standard, presumed to be higher ; but they have entered into competition with that secular morality by stating a morality of their own which has often seemed to those outside the Churches, not higher, but lower. They have wished to be States within the State, making laws for their own members on certain points and punishing their members for breaches of those laws, like the State itself. The punishment may be different from that of the State ; it may consist merely of refusal of the privileges of the Church ; but it remains punishment for breaches of Church law, which therefore is a law like that of the State, and implies a morality like that of the State, different only in degree and not in kind from secular morality.

And yet the Church all the while is, as I have said, committed to the religious view of morality, to the view that morality is only a *pis-aller*. Its function is to supersede morality altogether with the sense of God, not to supersede one morality with another, or one kind of training in morality with another. The moment it tries to do that, it is in competition with the State, with secular society. It is itself a secular society within the other, and subject to all the temptations of a secular society ; to the love of compromise, to the fear of truth lest it be dangerous. It is concerned to maintain its own existence, to uphold its own laws ; it is dominated by its own past, anxious not to be inconsistent with what it has said in that past ; it takes thought, not only for the morrow, but for yesterday. It is politic, even with the best motives, and continually moves men to smile at the contrast between its policy and its principles. It is, in fact, in a false position ; and no Church has yet clearly seen the falsity of this position or dared to escape from it. Every Church has laid down its own rules on some points of conduct ; and has punished, or tried to punish, those of its members who disobeyed them.

This confusion of thought, this inconsistency of conduct, is the result of a failure in all Churches to understand the difference between religion and morality, above all of a failure to understand the full meaning of the assertion that God exists. For if God really exists, if He is the supreme fact of the universe, if He is Love, then man can accomplish all things by loving Him and through His love ; and the function of a Church is to learn how men can best be aware of God

and of His Love, and how they can best attain to loving Him. This it must learn by means of its own fellowship. It is a brotherhood of human beings joined together by the common aim of learning this, and not by the common aim of maintaining or improving morality. It knows that, with an increase in the knowledge and the love of God, morality must necessarily improve ; at least, if it does not know that, it has ceased to be a religious body and has lost all reasons for its own existence. So its function is not to judge its members by their morality or conduct or indeed to judge them at all, but to help them to the knowledge and the love of God. Only through that knowledge can a man know what is right for him to do, only through that love can he have the desire to do it. The Church cannot tell him what is right for him to do ; nor can it give him the desire to do it. The first dogma of religion is that he gets the knowledge of what is right, and the desire to do it, from God Himself ; and he is a member of the Church because he wishes to know God, not because he wishes to know what the Church has to tell him about God's will.

The knowledge of God will come to the Church through, and in, all its members ; it cannot be discovered by the Church as an institution, as an abstraction, and then communicated by it to its members. So the Church, in its very nature, must be, not a State, a government, a hierarchy, but a fellowship, trusting in that fellowship for the knowledge of God, and not in any laws or past statements of its own. If it is a fellowship, it will live ; if it is anything else with the object of maintaining its own existence, it will die.

For it is truer of a Church than of anything else that he who would save his life shall lose it. But no Church has ever fully understood these facts, and so no Church has ever been completely a Church, has been able to distinguish itself sharply enough from all secular institutions, or has convinced mankind that it has a peculiar reason of its own for its existence. We still speak naturally of the morality of the Church as compared with the morality of the State. We are not aware that the very phrase, the morality of the Church, is an absurdity, like the phrase, the religion of the State. Ecclesiastical law is still a fact and still at some points in conflict with civil law ; and the Church sits in judgment, and ceases to be a Church when it does so.

Law, judgment, punishment, are a necessity to the State because its business is to maintain order ; but when the State judges a man, it judges his action and not the man himself. It has laid down that a man shall do this or shall not do that, and, in judging him, it is concerned, and rightly concerned, only with the question whether he has disobeyed its commands. It does not ask itself whether he was right to disobey them. It does not look beyond its own law, or the morality of which that law is an expression. But the Church, if it chooses to make laws and to sit in judgment upon those who disobey them, must begin by asking whether they were right in so disobeying them. For it, behind all laws, there is God and the relation between God and the individual man. If therefore it concerns itself only with its own laws and men's obedience to them, it ignores the relation between



man and God which it is its function to insist upon. But, if it looks beyond its own laws to this relation, it admits that they are not laws at all and that it has no right to enforce them. In fact its position as a law-giver and a judge is impossible; and this fact has always been felt by men in their resentment, whether open or suppressed, at the claims of Churches to lawmaking and judgment. The priest, when he becomes a judge, has ceased to be a priest; the Church, when it utters or enforces commands, has ceased to be a Church. It has degraded itself to the level of the State, which cannot exist unless it forces men to obey it, which appeals to the fears rather than to the love of men, which does not pretend to be anything but a compromise and a makeshift.

And since all morality is but a compromise and a makeshift, being based on a common consent, not on the passion of the individual for God, the Church should have no morality and should not lay down any rules of conduct. Prudence, if not a higher passion, should warn it against doing this. For any Church that would make laws out of the sayings of Christ must find itself in a difficulty. Either it must expel any members who do not obey all those laws, in which case it will soon have no members; or else it must choose among them and be open to the reproach of choosing to suit its own convenience. Thus the Church of England has certain laws of its own about divorce and other matters, the last relics of its old temporal power, as the Vatican is the last relic of the temporal power of the Pope; and to support these laws it attributes a peculiar validity to certain sayings of Christ, while

in its lawmaking it ignores other sayings which seem no less important to the Christian. It ignores, for instance, all the denunciations of riches. It does not expel from its communion all members with an income over a certain amount fixed by itself. It does not expel those who refuse to lend to anyone who asks for a loan. If it were reproached with this, it would answer, very justly, that it does not try to insist upon perfection in its members, for, if it did, it would have no members ; even its saints would not be worthy of it. And these sayings of Christ are counsels of perfection, examples of the manner in which men should try to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. All that is true ; but it follows that the Church should regard all other sayings of Christ in the same way. It should not make laws of some and an inspiration of others. It will make nonsense of the whole teaching of Christ unless it treats that teaching alike, unless it confesses that in all respects all men fall short of it, and that its own function is not to punish them at all for their shortcomings.

No Church yet has made this confession ; all Churches are still hampered by their own past lawmaking, by their will to power which has prevented them from ever being purely Churches ; and they are tied and bound also by the belief that they must be faithful to their own past, that it is this past which gives them the status of a Church. But will no Church, will not the Church of England, ever dare to affirm that it is a Church just because it has no status, no laws, no morality, no power of judgment, but only a common desire to know and to love God ? The Church which

first makes that affirmation will draw men to it as no Church has ever done ; and it will live as no Church has ever done. For it will welcome all sinners, as being itself sinful, without asking questions of them. It will know that to refuse its sacraments to any sinner, however open in his sin, is as if a doctor were to refuse help to a patient because he was very sick. “ I come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance ” were the words of Christ, and should be the words of the Church. Besides, what is the Church, to say that one sin is worse than another ? The State deals with the sin ; but the function of the Church is to deal with the sinner, with the man as a whole, and it cannot condemn any one man as being worse than any other. Its function is not to judge any man, but to fling open to all men its own knowledge of God ; and to ask the help of all men, no matter how sinful, in the furtherance of that knowledge. For consider how little, after ages of search, we still know of God ; and how we may be sure that each man has some knowledge of Him which is hidden from all others. There is supposed to be some common knowledge and experience of God in the Creeds ; but how scanty and dry it is, almost as scanty and dry as the morality of the Ten Commandments. And it is unintelligible except to those who can understand and enrich it with their own religious experience. In this matter of the knowledge of God we are hindered, much as we are in the matter of economic knowledge, by the belief that we know far more than we do, that there is a great achievement behind us common to all devout or educated men. The economist lays down the law, and the Church lays

down the law, when both should be eager for discovery, eager to learn from the experience of all men. Just as the poverty of our society proves that we have little knowledge of economics, so the sin, the stupidity, the ugliness, of our society prove that we have little knowledge of God ; that religion is still in its first blind beginnings with us, and that any Church which pretends to a certain and full knowledge of it is deceiving itself and others, like an ignorant and superstitious medicine-man of the past. What a Church needs first of all is awe and not to be terribly at home with Zion ; it needs to be full of awe itself at the mystery of the universe and the dimly perceived presence of God in it ; and then it will not attempt to fill its members with awe at its own wisdom ; still less will it attempt to impose a morality of its own upon them. Society, the State, has an excuse for imposing its own morality. It believes that this morality must be imposed if we are not to fall back into anarchy. But the concern of the Church is not to preserve our society from anarchy, or to enter into any competition with the State as a ruler. Its concern is to advance in the knowledge of God which shall some day supersede all morality, and which even now supersedes it in those heaven-sent moments when we are aware of God.

A Church should confess itself unfit to make any conditions whatever of membership. It should offer to all men the hospitality of God Himself, confessing that it lacks His omniscience. For what is it but the fellowship of those who desire the knowledge of God and who are all aware of their ignorance of Him ? How then shall some of them pass judgment on others ?

In this matter the greatest doctor knows that he is a child, the greatest saint that he is a sinner. There is, and must be, a continual failure among all members of the Church in that love which is the first essential of their religion, and through which alone the knowledge of God comes to man. Their very fellowship is but the expression of a desire to attain to that which is beyond them ; and how therefore can they refuse that fellowship to any man on the ground that he is unworthy of it ? The very refusal is a wilful failure in fellowship, a failure even to conceive what fellowship is. The individual member of a Church knows that, as an individual, he fails at every point, whether he be an archbishop or the humblest layman. But that is no reason why his Church in its corporate capacity should fail, should refuse even the first conditions of success. Yet all Churches still do refuse these first conditions, do limit the infinite hospitality of God which they should try to imitate ; and what is the cause of this fatal and incapacitating refusal ?

It is the belief which taints every Church that it has a certainty denied to other Churches ; and this certainty it arrogates to itself, not only in dogmas, but in matters of morals. It knows, as the State itself cannot know, that it is sinful to do this or that. It has a morality more sure, more absolute, than that of the State and not subject to the same change and progress. What it calls right is right in all circumstances and for ever ; and so it is with what it calls wrong. A man may not marry his deceased wife's sister because the Church says so. There is one of its fiats, its contributions to eternal and absolute morality ; and the

world smiles with a contempt that is not merely worldly at this wisdom which pretends to be celestial. God has spoken through His Church as He spoke on Mount Sinai ; and He says that a man may not marry his deceased wife's sister ! Or, if it is not God who has spoken, if it is only the Church that has made this law, what peculiar sanctity is there in the law ? Why should not the Church be prepared to alter its laws like the State ? Unless the Church has some peculiar knowledge of the mind of God, its laws are no more sacred than the laws of the State. But if the Church has this peculiar knowledge, what curious trivialities the mind of God has revealed to it. Can anybody believe that, with all the subtle and far-reaching sin of the world, with our poverty and riches, our wars, our ignored cruelty and injustice, God tells His Church that a man must not marry his deceased wife's sister, only that and a few other things of the same kind ? Christ does not tell us things of that kind. If His sayings are to be laws to us, they imply a revolution in our whole society ; they imply the excommunication by the Church of all its members, including its archbishops, until that revolution is accomplished. Therefore they are not laws, but examples of the manner in which our righteousness should exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, that is to say in which our righteousness should exceed itself. And this is true of all of them.

Every State, that is not very stupid, knows that its laws and morality are subject to change. But all Churches, having laws and a morality, try to assert their superiority over secular laws and morality by



refusing to change them. But the superiority of the Church, if it has a superiority, lies in this, that it has no laws and no morality. It does not enter into any competition with the State, because it does not conceive of God as entering into competition with earthly rulers. When we talk of the laws of God, the very phrase misstates the nature of God and is bad theology. For, in speaking of the laws either of Nature or of God, we still keep the notion of legality. We say that Nature or God punishes us when we break their laws. But the punishment for a breach of Nature's laws is merely the effect of a cause ; and we call it punishment when it is an effect disagreeable to us. We are as much subject to Nature, in the matter of cause and effect, when we suppose ourselves to break her laws as when we suppose ourselves to obey them. We can neither obey nor disobey them. Always we merely illustrate them ; and so they are not laws at all in any sense which gives meaning to the word. It is possible for us to rise above a subjection to Nature, according to the Christian faith ; but not by obedience or disobedience to any law of Nature. The word law, applied to Nature, is a metaphor that always misleads.

So, when in the past men talked about the laws of God, they used a metaphor which misled them. God was to primitive man what Nature is to us now. Any misfortune that happened to man was a punishment for disobedience of the laws of God, as now it seems to us a punishment for disobedience of the laws of Nature ; and many religious people still have this conception of God, and of all misfortunes as punishment for disobedience of His laws, in spite of Christ's warning

about those who were killed by the fall of the Tower of Siloam. So now we are told that this war is a punishment for our sins ; and often the clergy discover that the sins for which we are being punished are sins against the Church. If it be pointed out that, in the case of this war, God punishes the innocent with the guilty, the bishop with the atheist, for sins against His Church, then we are told that God acts with the mechanical precision of Nature. A certain cause produces a certain effect. In which case the war is no more a punishment than the earthquake at Lisbon was a punishment. It is merely the operation of the law of causation and not a moral process at all, being quite impersonal.

But God, according to the Christian faith, is a person ; and His relation with us is not mechanical but personal. He is more completely a person than any man ; and therefore His relations with us are less mechanical than our relations with each other. But the relation of the punisher to the punished is, in its essence, mechanical, not personal. It is the relation of an abstract institution to an individual. The State is more mechanical than any individual ; that is the only justification of its system of punishment. It confesses that it has to make rules and that it has to punish for a breach of them. It tries to be as much like Nature as possible in the certainty of the operation of its laws. But the father in the parable of the Prodigal Son is not at all like Nature. There is no mechanical certainty in the operation of his laws. Indeed he makes none, because he is a person, not a process, dealing with another person, his

son. And Christ tells us that the behaviour of the father in that parable is the behaviour of God. Our relation with God is not that of man to Nature, or of man to the State, but of one person to another ; and it is more completely that of one person to another than any relation between man and man can be, even the relation between father and son. Indeed, when we say that we are the children of God, we use a metaphor which understates, not overstates, the personality of our relation with Him. It is not a rhetorical exaggeration but a failure to express the fulness of what we mean. Our relation with God is the most personal possible ; and we may refuse or accept it just as we may refuse or accept a personal relation with any other person. But God does not punish us if we refuse it. We, of our own will, deny ourselves what is most worth having in life. And it is always we who refuse the relation. God does not refuse it but offers it always, as the sun offers light and heat. It is a relation purely spiritual and not economic, and because it is purely spiritual there follows no punishment from God for refusal of it. A lover does not punish the refusal of love ; there remains merely the fact of the refusal of love and all that it means.

The laws which society makes, and for breaches of which it punishes, are impersonal in their very nature. They are a machinery with which society protects itself. But God does not need to protect Himself with punishments or laws, nor does His Church need to protect Him, or itself, with them. It exists, as He exists, and need not take part in the struggle for existence. If it does, it will cease to exist as a Church.

This does not mean that a Church must maintain no discipline over its own officers, its ministers or priests. But it must make a clear distinction between this discipline and its relation to those of its members who are not ministers or priests. The Church is in this world though not of it. To express itself in this world it must have a material organisation. It must, for instance, have its services at regular times, performed according to a more or less fixed ritual. Priests and ministers have undertaken to perform these services and are paid for doing so. They are subject to a legal obligation, which needs to be enforced just because it is legal, not religious. There they differ from other members of the Church, who are under no legal obligation to it and in no legal relation with it. But the priest or the minister is also under other obligations to the Church which are all really legal. He is under the obligation to refrain from certain obvious vices, not necessarily in themselves worse than other vices, but peculiarly harmful to his efficacy as an officer of the Church, because they are obvious. So, if a priest or a minister fall into these vices, he is rightly dismissed from his office. But he is not rightly therefore dismissed from the Church, nor is he to be judged worse than any other member of it. An unfrocked clergyman is not a greater sinner than any other Churchman merely because as a matter of discipline it has been necessary to unfrock him. The Church cannot insist on real goodness in its officers any more than in any of its other members ; and the pretence that a priest is better than other men, because he is a priest, is absurd. Within the Church, because it is a

religious body, there must be no pretence of different degrees of goodness. An archbishop is one not because he is better than a curate, but because he has certain faculties that fit him for the office. If he proves himself unfit for it, he should be gently but firmly removed from it, not as being bad but as being unfit. But we have the notion, as Samuel Butler said, that a clergyman ought to be a kind of human Sunday; and we are shocked if he behaves like a very human weekday. Clergymen who are unfrocked for such behaviour are treated with a cruelty the worse because it is half-unconscious. They are supposed to have utterly disgraced themselves by falling short of that high standard of goodness which is required of all clergymen. We ought to be aware that they may still be as good as the best of bishops. For the best of bishops knows that he himself falls utterly short of any standard of goodness. Indeed he has no standard, but only a desire for a goodness which he knows he cannot, in this life, attain to.

There remains the very difficult question of discipline in matters of dogma, which naturally arises here, but which I will only touch on, as it is not really part of my subject. It is difficult because it is always a question of degree. We are all agreed, probably, that if a clergyman becomes an atheist he ought to resign or be removed. He is ordained, and paid, to preach not atheism but Christianity; and atheism is not consistent with Christianity. In fact a clergyman, as an officer, undertakes, not that he will believe certain things, which is impossible, but really that he will cease to be a clergyman if he ceases to believe them.

Therefore if he ceases to believe them he ought, as a matter of discipline, to cease to be a clergyman.

Still it remains difficult to determine what is the irreducible minimum of the things which a clergyman must believe ; and it becomes impossible, if the Church regards any statement of its dogmas as complete and perfect and for all time. It is impossible for any human beings to produce such a statement about the nature of ultimate reality ; while, if you assume that such a statement has been directly revealed by God to man, you still have to admit that it is expressed in a language made by men and therefore utterly inadequate for the expression of any final and absolute truth. Such a statement, in human language, cannot be fully intelligible, because the language is inadequate. And this means, in practice, that men will understand it as they choose. They may profess to understand it as the Church tells them ; but in that case, also, they will understand what the Church tells them as they choose. The result must be an insincerity the more demoralising if unconscious. For the believer accepts a form of words, but exercises his will and intelligence in his interpretation of his formal belief, and still more in his practical application of it.

Now if a Church confesses that its creed is only the best it can do, it does not encourage this kind of insincerity. And in that case it will not regard any desire for revision of its creed as treacherous or immoral in its officers. Further, the creed itself will, without any insincerity, be differently regarded by all members of the Church. Since it is offered as the best the Church can do, they will not try to force



themselves to think it the best possible ; and all, again without insincerity, will be able to profess it with more or less implied doubt. We all know, if we know ourselves at all, that there is a faith in us which we cannot express, which no one ever has expressed. Most religious quarrels have been rather over the expression than over the faith itself. It is the faith itself that produces Churches and religion ; and it will not fail if Churches give up the pretence that they have succeeded in expressing it perfectly and once for all, as virtue would not disappear if we gave up the pretence that our current morality was utterly virtuous. The effort of current morality should be to express, more and more closely, the highest human idea of virtue ; and the effort of a creed should be to express, more and more closely, the unexpressed faith of mankind, or of that portion of mankind who act on their faith.

Finally, the conduct of all Churches in the present war raises a question which no Church has yet faced, but which must be faced if the Churches are to keep any credit with those who care most for religion. In the present war all Churches, including the Church of Rome, have proved to be more national than Catholic. I will begin with the case of the Church of Rome, not out of any hostility to it, but because it, more than any other Church in Western Europe, claims to be Catholic rather than national. Yet it has been national in Germany, in Austria, in France, in Belgium. In each case it has marched with the nation as spontaneously as if it were an army, not a Church. Holding everywhere the same theological beliefs, professing

the same moral principles, knowing, or being under the moral duty to know, the facts about the origin of the war, which in the main are easily discovered, the Church in Germany has yet been German for the purposes of the war, and the Church in France has been French, in both cases, so far as we know, without misgivings or dissension. Now it is clear that both Germany and France cannot be right ; in one country or in the other the Church of Rome must be supporting and encouraging wrong ; and it must be doing so because in that country it is more national than Catholic, more concerned for the victory of the country than for the victory of right. It is easy to say that the Catholics in Germany have been deceived ; but it is the duty of the Church of Rome, as a Church, not to be deceived ; to act as one Church concerned only for right and truth, if it is concerned with the war at all. The war proves that as soon as France and Germany go to war, it is not one Church at all, but two national Churches as much in conflict with each other as if they were armies. They differ not merely in manners and customs and national idiom, as French music differs from German, but as the French army differs from the German, and for the same reason, namely, because they are national rather than Catholic. When war breaks out they choose to be national ; they enlist as if they were soldiers. They believe that God is on the side of their nation ; and one of them, at least, must believe that because it believes more in the nation than in God.

So it is only by a legal fiction that the Church of Rome has remained Catholic during the war. The

Pope is supreme head of the Church, on condition that he shall rule but not govern. He is forced to be nationally neutral just because his Church in all belligerent countries is not nationally neutral. This neutrality is imposed upon him so that he may preserve the show of Catholicity ; and it is merely a misapplied metaphor. The neutrality of a country does not imply that it is no judge of right and wrong, but merely that it is not fighting. So no declaration of neutrality is required of the Pope ; for it is not his business to fight. But he declares himself neutral because his Church, or Churches, are fighting. As between nations he denies himself that right of moral judgment which he has always asserted as between individual members of his Church, because he knows that his judgment would be ignored by the warring nations, the warring Churches. If it is his function to guide his flock in moral questions at all, it is more than ever his function to do so in the present war. He has refused to exercise that function now because he rules, but does not govern, a number of Churches that have suddenly betrayed the fact that they are national. The Church of Rome might, of course, be pacifist. The Pope might state that all war is wrong, resistance as much as aggression ; but the Church of Rome is not, and never has been, pacifist, and the Pope does not proclaim that all war is wrong in itself. All he does is to say that he will not declare who is right and who is wrong in the present war.

Now the Church of England escapes the difficulty peculiar to the Pope only because it is the Church of England. If the Archbishop of Canterbury were

Primate of a Church with German members, he would be in the same difficulty, unless its German members sided with England. Therefore the Church of England has no right to sneer at the Pope, or to enjoy the difficulty in which he finds himself. The Pope has separated himself from the national hopes and fears of his flock because they are of different and warring nations ; the Archbishop of Canterbury has had no need to do this because his flock are all of one nation ; but the Church of England has been as passionately national as any branch of the Church of Rome, as passionately eager for victory. It has assumed that the English cause was just and has taken every opportunity of saying so.

The fact that I and most Englishmen believe that in this case the Church of England is on the right side does not affect the question whether in a war the Church ought to be on any side. In this case the Church needs to ask itself, not whether it is on the right side, but whether, if England had been in the wrong as clearly as Germany is in the wrong, it would have proclaimed that England was in the wrong. For clearly, if it is the duty of the Church to fight for the nation when it is in the right, it must be the duty of the Church to fight against the nation when it is in the wrong. But will anyone pretend that the Church of England would do this ? Has any Church ever done it ? You may say that it is too much to ask of the members or priests of a Church, who are only human beings, that they should have the power to see when their nation is in the wrong, that they should be able to judge truly when all others are judging falsely. We have no reason

to believe that the heads of the Roman or Lutheran Churches in Germany are worse or more foolish than the heads of Churches elsewhere ; yet they have, no doubt honestly enough, judged of the war like other Germans and believed that the German cause is just. They have not said a word against the violation of Belgian neutrality ; they have, the Lutherans no doubt more violently than the Romans, preached a German crusade and denounced the wickedness of their enemies, just as in England ministers of all religions have denounced the wickedness of the Germans. But let us assume that ministers of religion are no better judges of right and wrong in a national cause than other men ; and, assuming this, let us ask what is the duty of a Church towards a nation at war ? It cannot be to encourage that nation, whether it is right or wrong. A Church cannot exist merely for national purposes ; it cannot be a department of the State camouflaged so that it may do the work of the State all the better for its disguise. That may be the State's view of the Church ; but it cannot be the Church's view of itself. For, if it is, the Church is not a Church at all ; it does not worship God, but the nation, or it worships a God who is not the God of all men, but only a God of the nation and the rival of other national Gods. All Christian Churches now profess to worship one God above all nations ; and they profess to exist for the worship of that God and so not for national purposes. Therefore the duty of the Church, even if the nation be fighting for its life, is not to encourage the nation in its fight. The Church is not concerned for the victory of the nation at all, no

matter how momentous the issue may seem. For it is to be remembered that a nation might profit spiritually more by defeat than by victory. Most clergymen of the Church of England would say that in the present war Germany would profit spiritually rather by defeat than by victory; and most Roman priests and Lutheran pastors in Germany would say the same of England. Victory in war is a material success; and as a Church is not concerned for the material success, for the riches, of its individual members, so it is not concerned for the material success of a nation. No doubt a German Lutheran pastor would say that material success for Germany means spiritual success for all the world; but he would say that because to him Germany is not a material fact but a spiritual fact, an absolute like God, which comes between him and God. To a clergyman of the Church of England God must be the supreme spiritual fact; and all nations, including England, must be facts part spiritual and part material, facts which do not blind him to the existence of God. England is not an absolute to the Church of England, if it is a Church. The Church of England is not the Church belonging to England and subservient to it any more than it is the Church belonging to any one class in England. Rather it is that branch of the Church which tries to make England worship the Christian God.

So the Church is not concerned for the victory of England in this or in any war; it is concerned for the victory of God over the hearts of Englishmen. No more than the Church of Rome has it ever been pacifist, and I am not contending that it should be.



It is not called upon to denounce the English nation if it goes to war, for it does not maintain that war must be wrong. But also it does not maintain, as a dogma, that in any war England must be right ; nor is it called upon to decide in any particular war whether England is right or wrong. But, that being so, it should not declare, even in the present war, that England is right, nor should it in any way work for the victory of England, any more than it would work for the material prosperity of any individual Churchman. Here I am speaking of the duty of the Church as a Church. The priest is a man and, as a man, he has his right of private judgment. We may expect him to be prejudiced in favour of his own country, like all other men ; we should think the worse of him if he did not passionately desire the victory of his country in a cause that he believes to be just. Only, as a priest, it is not his duty to express his desire, or to take part in national controversy, or to give his time and energy to work that makes for the victory of his country. Those who think that it is his duty to do these things regard the Church as a luxury which we can afford in time of peace but must give up with other luxuries in time of war. They do not take the Church or its peculiar functions seriously. In peace-time we may pretend that it has a right to its own existence ; but when the nation is fighting for its life, then the Church must fight too ; it must, like a factory, be converted to munition-making. And many clergymen have proved in the present war that they too share this opinion.

They have turned their churches into factories of moral munitions ; they have, in the warmth of their

hearts, made victory their absolute, like the priests and ministers of Germany ; and even those who applaud them most, and say that clergymen are human beings after all, mean that the Church after all is a useful human institution and has proved its right to exist even when the nation is fighting for its life—by taking part in the fight.

But on such terms the Church cannot continue to exist in our modern world. Very soon, perhaps, an ugly question will be asked of it, to which it will have no answer—the question why, if it becomes passionately national in a quarrel between nations, it is always meekly pacifist in quarrels between classes. Always it “deprecates” a class war, but never a war between nations. We cannot imagine it converting itself into a factory of moral munitions for the poor in case of a revolution ; at least the poor cannot imagine it ; and they are beginning to say so. In a Church paper which certainly is not on the side of the rich against the poor there was printed lately this sentence : “That a class war, based on the notion of a mere redistribution by force of this world’s material goods, can achieve a lasting benefit to mankind, is a fallacy which Christianity exists to expose.” That may be ; but no one who wishes for a class war hopes by means of it merely to redistribute the world’s material goods by force. The hope is by force to establish another order which will end the class war, just as in this war between nations we hope to establish by force another order which will end war.

Why is it that the Church shares and encourages the hope in one case and not in the other ? Why does it

preach against force in one case and not in the other ? The answer which all revolutionaries make is that war is desired by the rich and powerful in one case and not in the other. The talk about force seems to them to be mere sophistry. They say that the class war exists and is being carried on by force now ; their desire is only to give greater force to the weak, victory to those who are now always defeated. The Church cries peace where there is no peace ; and cries it in the interests of the rich.

At present I cannot see that the Church has any answer to this charge. I do not believe that its inconsistency is all the result of subserviency to the rich ; rather I think it comes of the lack of any clear principle ; and this lack of principle makes it fatally easy for individual bishops and clergymen to do what is popular. They are, like other men, swept away by national feeling ; and, like other men of their class, they fear revolution and a class war. But their inconsistency is fatal to the influence of the Church among those of the poor who are most naturally religious, who believe most in justice and truth. They see the Church without any principle or doctrine at all in matters that concern them most. They see religion in every country the slave of national passions, while it rebukes the passions of the oppressed. Clearly the Church must reach some consistency on this point. It must be ready to throw itself into the class war or else refuse to throw itself into the nation's war. It cannot be left to individual clergymen to take which side they choose in either war, or to take no side at all. In that case the mass of them will always side with the

nation in a national war, and will side with neither rich nor poor in a class war. And this lack of consistency in individuals will be justly imputed to the Church as a whole.

How then is the Church to escape from this inconsistency? What principle can it find to govern its conduct in all secular disputes? The principle of complete pacifism is no guide; for there is no reason why it should be applied to war alone. All conflicts are the result of sin in one party or the other, or in society itself; and war is only conflict in its acutest form. The Church may say that where there is conflict there must be sin, but it cannot excommunicate all those who are engaged in any conflict whatsoever. If it did that it would have to excommunicate the man who prosecutes a burglar; for he is in conflict with a burglar. It would have to denounce the police, the law, civil and criminal, and the exercise of any kind of force whatever. There are those who say that all force is wrong; but since the Church is certainly not going to say that, I will not attempt here to refute them. But the question remains, What is the Church going to say or do?

I have contended that the Church does not exist to help the State in the maintenance of its morality, of its order, or of itself. Nor does it exist to work any kind of political change in the State or between States. Therefore it is not called upon to take part in any kind of secular dispute, whether it be a war between nations or a class war. Its function is to teach and to practise those principles which alone can put an end to all conflicts between men or classes or nations. If it

confines itself to that function, it will certainly lose material power and popularity in a time like the present. Men will ask, What is the use of it, if it takes no part in the life of the nation ; what is the use of bishops if they will not help our statesmen ? Behind that question there lurks unexpressed the question, What is the use of God, if He does not help us in our hour of need ? The Church exists to answer that question and to convince men that its answer is true. The Church is there, like God Himself, so that men may turn to it in their hour of need for spiritual not material help ; it is a place in which they may forget their secular quarrels and pray together, whether they be rich or poor, whether they be Germans or Englishmen, not that God will be on their side, but that they may be on His. We may ask ourselves this question—whether most of our churches now are places in which a German could worship God, in which he could forget that the priest and his fellow worshippers were his enemies. To that question only one answer is possible. To him an English church would be a praying-house of England. He could not find sanctuary even there from the quarrel that makes him a hostile animal to English Christians.

But Christianity maintains, and it is the duty of the Church to maintain, that no men, not even Germans, are hostile animals ; and in war that is its chief duty. It can safely leave to secular institutions the function of treating Germans as enemies. There is no fear that we shall forget they are enemies ; but there is a fear that we shall forget they are men. And so it is in all conflicts. We do not need to be encouraged in our

sense that we are on the right side ; but we do need to be told that, whether we are right or wrong, our enemies are still men, that still we have more in common with them than against them, because we are all children of God.

That is merely a vague formula put so ; but it is the function of the Church to make it more than a formula, to express it with passion, with precision and in detail, combating every formula and all conduct opposed to it. One need not ask whether any Church has performed this function in the present war. They have all made hasty concessions to the Sermon on the Mount, and have then turned to the business of encouraging the nation in its secular duty of victory. So they have been themselves secular, and a Church that is secular cannot continue to exist except on sufferance. It must find its own divine duties if it is to justify its existence ; and if it is not aware of them now, if it turns to secular duties so that it may not be idle, then the sooner it becomes aware of them the better.

These digressions are not utterly irrelevant. I am trying to discover the logic implied in the very word Church, as in the very word God. That logic should preserve the Church from all imitation of the State, from all efforts to maintain itself by secular methods or to do the work of the State. A State exists partly to maintain itself, but a Church does not ; and there is no analogy between God and an earthly ruler. Because God is a Spirit it is misleading even to think of Him as a ruler.

Spirit does not rule, it persuades ; it does not even persuade, it charms. There is no word in our language, always full of images drawn from the relation of use,



for the purity of its influence. "There is only one way of converting a man," said Lao-tze, "and that is to persuade him that he is obeying the dictates of his own heart." That is the manner in which spirit works. It is the still, small voice, and men often are aware only of their own answer to it, not of the voice itself, so small and still it is. So the true idea of the Church is bound up with the idea of God as Spirit; and the Church is not the mouthpiece of God, who needs no mouthpiece, who expresses Himself, but an answer to Him. It does not need to make of itself a fortress of virtue, with walls frowning at the sinner and the infidel. It exists, if at all, because of the virtue and the faith that are in man; and its function is not to preserve these, but to express them in such a way that all men will recognise the desire of their own hearts in that expression.

There is this error, even in many of those who love their Church most purely and passionately, that they love it for its achievement. There are Catholics who have learnt to take no thought for the morrow; but still they take thought for yesterday. They speak and think of the Church and the faith only as a heritage; and to them the civilisation of God seems always to be threatened by the barbarism of to-day. For them revelation is in the past, and we must fight a desperate battle to preserve it. It is all a matter of memory, or forgetfulness; but the spirit in man is moved, here and now, by the living Spirit of God. And it is most easily and intensely moved in fellowship. Love between man and God is not a private and particular matter; nor is God a connoisseur of beautiful souls. His desire,

if there is a God, is that all men shall love Him together, and love each other in their love for Him. Indeed the universe is of such a nature that they can love Him only in their love for each other ; they can be aware of Him only when they are as real to each other as to themselves. And, further, the spirit needs a training, like that of art, if it is to be moved here and now by the living Spirit of God. Men cannot go off by themselves and, in the routine of the individual struggle for life, be sure of wonderful moments. There are many so much oppressed by that struggle that the moments never come to them, or, if they do come, they seem a mere irrelevant chance. It is the function of the Church to make of every man not a drudge, but, as it were, a player in an orchestra of its own music and his. Its concern is to make the music so that men shall hear it and wish to take their own part in it, so that the orchestra and the choir may grow larger and larger. Only by the beauty of its music can it persuade men to take part in it. If it says that it plays only classical music, and that those who do not like it are damned ; if it is filled with fears lest all the music of the past should be forgotten ; if it inquires anxiously of all its players whether they really like this music of the past ; whether they sing or play it just as the old masters would have it sung or played ; then it will lose the power of making the music of the present. For religion is like art in this, that it must always make its own present expression if it is to live. And its achievement, like that of art, is in its desire.

All the secular institutions of men are cramped by a fear of the treachery of things. We believe that we

preserve society by saying "No" to our own hearts, by denying our own highest values. And religion itself has always been cramped by a fear of the treachery of God. But the notion that God can be treacherous, that He can betray us through our highest values, is contrary to the logic implied in the very word God. It is the very function of a Church to deny the treachery of God, to affirm our highest values, not only in its creeds but in its very constitution; to trust utterly in God, not in its own fortress of dogma or morality. For the State there are rules of conduct, which it must enforce so that it may exist. It is in competition with other States; at this moment our State is in a deadly competition, and therefore it makes new rules of conduct and enforces them with a new severity. But a Church, so long as it is one, is never in competition and needs to make no rules of conduct. It is like St. Peter, who could walk on the waves only when he was no longer concerned for his own safety. Certainly the logic of the Church is a high and difficult logic never yet fully understood or acted upon, because it is the logic of God projected into this intimidating and bewildering world.



VIII

THE BASIS OF CONTINUITY

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## SYNOPSIS.

The powerlessness of the Church, made manifest during the war, is due to its lack of unity.

The great practical barrier to reunion is the theory, dominant in the Anglican Church in modern times, that an unbroken ceremonial transmission of ministry is a necessary part of the constitution of a Church.

So long as this mechanical continuity has been maintained it is not held to be essential that the whole body of the Church shall have approved of the form of government or chosen its ministers.

Those who lay stress on this orderly transmission of authority do so because they believe it to be the only means by which the moral and devotional tradition can be assured.

Yet history does not show us that it has generally been the bishops who have been the true champions of the Faith.

What are the factors which constitute the identity of a nation ?

How far can the same criteria of identity be applied to the Church ?

The Scriptural basis of the doctrine of the necessity for a continuous succession examined.

The evidence leads us to no certain conclusion that any form of government was imposed *jure divino* upon the Church.

From what we know of our Lord's attitude towards religious corporations it seems unlikely that He would have laid down a rigid rule the effect of which would be to give power to an order or caste, with power to transmit authority to the end of time.



## THE BASIS OF CONTINUITY

THE outstanding feature of the Great War which began in 1914, as it has affected the Church of Christ, is (or ought to be, if Christians duly consider it) the total failure of the Church either to prevent the war from beginning, or to stop it when it had once begun. The Church has been so helpless, indeed, throughout the war, that statesmen have not even hoped that any message of truth should proceed out of its mouth or any act be done which would have any lasting value for the world's peace.

This paralysis of the Church in the crisis of the world's fate is chiefly due, as all men would allow, to the lack of unity in the Church. Not only is the Church not of one mind : its members cannot even be brought to meet for worship. If nothing else kept them apart, the fear lest they might be asked to partake together in that which is called—not in grim satire but in sober reverence—"the blessed Sacrament of Unity" would effectually prevent a meeting. The Eucharist effectually keeps Christian people asunder, and that because the Church cannot decide upon the qualifications necessary in the celebrant.

Now the chief cause of disunion among Christians

is that no one can agree as to the factors which go to make up the indispensable conditions of the Church's life.

In the Anglican Church, with which this Essay is mainly concerned, the idea, prevalent during the last generation and very generally assumed at the present moment, is that a Church cannot be said to have any true existence unless its officers can trace their authority by a direct ceremonial transmission, through the laying on of hands, to Apostolic times. Sacraments administered by others than these have only a doubtful and conditional value. They are irregular, and their spiritual value depends merely upon the mercy of God, who may be expected not to allow schismatics and heathen to suffer from their mistakes and ignorance, provided they occur in good faith. Very few people among High Anglicans would suggest that a Eucharist celebrated by Presbyterians had no spiritual value, but they would say that no instructed Anglican could, without committing a sin, take part in such a service, even if it were for the sake of receiving the Sacrament of unity with wife or father or mother, who might belong to that communion.

In order that a Church shall continue to have a valid existence, it is not held to be necessary that the Church shall have deliberately desired this ceremonial transmission of life. It is sufficient even if it came about accidentally. In the reign of Elizabeth it was exceedingly difficult to find means for continuing the Anglican succession. All the bishops at that time in possession of sees refused to take part in consecrating a new Archbishop, and suffered imprisonment as a

result of their refusal. Dr. Maitland describes the actual changes made as follows :—

“ A radical change in doctrine, worship and discipline has been made by Queen and Parliament against the will of prelates and Ecclesiastical Councils. The legislative power of the Convocations is once more subjected to royal control. The derivation of episcopal from royal jurisdiction has been once more asserted in the words of Henry VIII. What might fairly be called a plenitude of ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the corrective sort can be, and at once is, committed to delegates who constitute what is soon known as the Court of High Commission, and strongly resembles the consistory of a German Prince.

“ The co-operation of four ‘ Bishops ’ would be necessary if Matthew Parker was to sit where Reginald Pole had sat. Four men in episcopal Orders might be found : for instance, Barlow, of whose Protestant religion there could be no doubt, since Albert of Prussia had lately attested it ; but these men would not be in possession of English sees. Moreover, it seems to have been doubted whether the Edwardian Ordinal had been revived as part of the Edwardian Prayer Book. Cecil was puzzled, but equal to the occasion. In a document redolent of the papal chancery Elizabeth ‘ supplied ’ all ‘ defects,’ and at length, on the 17th of December, at the Chapel at Lambeth, Parker was consecrated with Edwardian rites by Barlow, Scory, Coverdale and Hodgkin. The story of a simpler ceremony at the Nag’s Head Tavern was not concocted until long afterwards ; it should have for pendants a Protestant fable which told of a dramatic scene between Elizabeth and the Catholic prelates, and an Anglican fable which

strove to suggest that the Prayer Book was sanctioned by a synod of Bishops and clergy.”<sup>1</sup>

These bishops having thus been found, and the new Archbishop consecrated by a ritual approved by the Crown, their action, backed by an autocratic government in which the Church only very doubtfully concurred, is held to be enough to constitute a valid transmission of life. Similarly, if three suffragan bishops were now to agree to reform the Church and start a new succession, this Church would be held by High Anglicans to constitute a true branch of the Church, and its sacraments would possess validity, even though their action were denounced by all the other bishops, while a Church founded with the unanimous consent of all the communicants in a nation, and having the support of all the presbyterate, would not be held to possess a valid life or to administer true sacraments, if it had not bishops, however procured, who could continue a “valid succession.”

This theory as to the criterion of a true Church life has not always been the belief of the majority of Anglican Churchmen, nor does it now possess any official sanction.

In the seventeenth century, Anglican divines of the highest views communicated quite readily with French Calvinists, and English Churchmen in recent times used to receive the Communion when in Scotland at the same Table as Scotch Presbyterians. The stricter theory has only become dominant during the Victorian era, and has only been generally held during the last thirty years.

<sup>1</sup> “Cambridge Modern History,” vol. xi, pp. 570, 571.

It would be a great mistake to suppose that this theory is held only by ignorant and fanatical bigots. It is held by some of the ablest and most revered leaders in the Anglican Church. It cannot therefore be dismissed lightly, as a mere superstition. No doctrine at this moment so effectually bars the way to Christian reunion, and if we are to clear the way for the Church to exercise her true influence in the world, we must first meet the main difficulty which at the moment chiefly stops all further progress in the path of union.

A supporter of the doctrine of the necessity of Apostolic succession would urge that the vitality of a society depends upon the orderly transmission of authority. This provision, they would urge, is not a mere ceremony; it is the sacramental expression of the transmission of ideas and traditions of thought. The exercise of the authority need not by any means be the same in each age: it is conceivable that in one age authority might be exercised by the Pope, at another by a synod of diocesan bishops, or at another time by a bishop consecrated for every parish. The outward form may vary indefinitely, but the essential thing is that the authority must be transmitted by one qualified by his office to transmit it. There would be nothing contrary to this theory if each congregation provided itself with a duly consecrated bishop. All that the theory requires is that no one shall pretend to administer the Eucharist except he be given authority to do so by one set apart for the purpose of transmitting this authority.

It is well for us, however, to remember that the

guarding of a great and beneficent tradition by a succession of officials is not necessarily connected at all with the doctrine that such an office must be conferred by those already possessing it. Mr. Rawlinson has given us an instance of this in the case of colleges.<sup>1</sup> The head of a college is appointed sometimes by a visitor, sometimes by election by the Fellows. The form of his appointment does not necessarily modify his important function of guarding and developing the traditions of his college, nor is it necessary that he should be appointed by any one traditional ceremony. Other instances will readily occur to us. The traditions of a cathedral are well, some will say only too well, preserved by deans and canons who are appointed by methods various and odd ; yet whether appointed by the Crown, the Lord Chancellor, or the bishop, they guard with the most conservative anxiety the usages of their cathedrals. So the Judicial Bench, the Army and the Navy, a great public school, all keep a succession of offices, guarding a great tradition, but in no case is it necessary that the incumbent of the office should have received his appointment from one who has held it himself, or by means of the same ceremonies and words.

It is often assumed that bishops have, as a matter of fact, been the main instruments in preserving the *depositum fidei* ; but this is a very doubtful proposition. It was not the bishops, but the general consensus of the Christian conscience, which preserved the Church from Arianism. The bishops hesitated in their faith

<sup>1</sup> "Foundations," p. 421.



in a manner differentiating them in no whit from the clergy and laity. There are very few indications in mediæval times, apart from one or two exceptional cases, that bishops made any real efforts to withstand the wave of materialism and corruption which swept over the Church. At the Reformation it was certainly not the bishops who restored to the Church that of which mediævalism had robbed it, and it was rather to the Sovereign than to the Episcopate that the Church had to look for that wise resistance to the dangerous tendencies of the ultra-reformers. We owe more to Elizabeth, to Cecil, and to the presbyter Richard Hooker than we owe to Whitgift and Grindal.<sup>1</sup> But the most lamentable failure of the Episcopate in all Church history is made plain to us in the Vatican Council of 1870, when in a gathering of over five hundred bishops only two could be found to bear witness against the monstrous historical assumptions of the Constitution "*Pastor Aeternus*."

At the Council of Trent, says Lord Acton, the bishops impressed on the Church the stamp of an intolerant age, and perpetuated by its decrees the spirit of an austere immorality. At the Vatican Council the bishops deliberately subordinated the truth of history as shown to it by men like Döllinger and Acton and Gladstone to the exigencies of political and ecclesiastical expediency. Among the statements

<sup>1</sup> Queen Elizabeth was continually urging the bishops to stand upon their own legs, when they were timidly inclined to lean upon the support either of Parliament or of the Crown. (Frere, "*The English Church in the Reign of Elizabeth and James I.*," p. 166.)

subscribed by the assembled Episcopate at the Vatican Council are the following :—

“ Si quis igitur dixerit, beatum Petrum Apostolum non esse a Christo Domino constitutum Apostolorum omnium principem et totius Ecclesiae militantis visibile caput : vel eundem honoris tantum, non autem verae propriaeque jurisdictionis primatum ab eodem Domino nostro Jesu Christo directe et immediate accepisse : anathema sit.

“ Si quis dixerit, non esse ex ipsius Christi Domini institutione, seu jure divino, ut beatus Petrus in primatu super universam Ecclesiam habeat perpetuos successores : aut Romanum Pontificem non esse beati Petri in eodem primatu successorem : anathema sit.

“ A perpetual dictator was needed,” says Dr. Barry, “ and who could it be save the Pontifex Maximus ? ” A cynic might well exclaim that Christ has left power to the laity in His Church to preserve the faith so often betrayed by bishops, and that if bishops answered any useful purpose in the ship of the Church it was that of the barometer rather than of the captain : they registered the storms or the calm weather, but they were powerless to control them. Indeed it is extraordinary that the claim made for the Episcopate that it has constantly upheld the faith against innovation should be so readily accepted and so uncritically repeated. It has surely been quite as often true that the laity have kept the bishops from heresy as that the bishops have preserved the laity. No one would dispute that an orderly government promotes unity as well as purity of doctrine in the Church, but there seems

to be little proof that the Episcopate is in itself an essential, or even always a successful, organ for securing this continuity or unity in truth.

The Anglo-Catholic theory of the Church does, however, demand that we should connect the continuity of Church life with the continuity of the Episcopate.

A break in this orderly transmission of authority is held to be fatal, a breach in the life of a Church, a wound so mortal and disastrous, because it is held to be a break in the transmission of the moral and spiritual tradition. Those who uphold the theory are not fighting for ceremonies, much less for caste and privilege: they are fighting for the preservation of the truths which they believe our Lord left in charge to His Church. We cannot deal honestly with the theory if we forget this.

We have then to consider seriously the question, "How far does the vitality of spiritual life in a society depend upon the orderly transmission of authority in its administrative offices?" No one, surely, would deny in the case of a nation that this "Apostolic succession" is a serious and important element in the preservation of the nation's continuous life. A revolution, in which the sovereign power in a State is overthrown, and a new sovereignty thrown up, as it were, by a popular uprising, does—who can doubt it—endanger the orderly evolution of national life. Moral values are likely to become obscured; the delicate balance upon which national stability rests will be imperilled; the long unwritten traditions which lie at the root of all great governing classes may be lost and have to be evolved anew with great effort, and

after much confusion. All these disasters may follow the loss of administrative tradition, and we must fully recognise that this applies no less to the Church than to the nation. An "Apostolic succession" through which each officer in a Church is set apart by one who in himself represents a tradition going back beyond the dawn of history is not a thing to be laughed at or despised. Those Churches which have retained it have perhaps shown themselves on the whole less liable to violent one-sided reactions than those which have lost it. There is felt by many people to be a certain indefinable assurance, a quiet grace of order and peace, an absence of self-consciousness which comes, so we may perhaps believe, from an unbroken tradition, which works subconsciously in the life of the society. It is no light matter to imperil this ; it is a great disaster to lose it. Those who most dislike this theory of the Church ought to realise not only that it is held by some very good and very learned men, but also that it is held passionately and with a deep sense of its importance to the Christian life. This is so because it is felt to be connected with that continuity of the devotional and sacramental life of the Church which is rightly regarded as a great part of the inheritance which Christ has bequeathed to us. To play fast and loose with the constitution of a society, to alter its traditional procedure, to sever the bonds which unite it to its past, is a far more serious thing than might appear to the casual critic of ecclesiastical institutions. For the forms, even when they are somewhat decayed and corrupted forms, may protect that tender spirit which needs a

strong vessel, if its fragrance is not to be lost. And the lover of all the secret, hidden life of the Church, so little known to those outside its borders, who only hear the creaking of the ship's antique machinery, fears not so much for the framework as for that which the framework protects from the storms without. He may be wrong (we believe he is wrong) in thinking that only one kind of framework will protect the treasure within ; he may be wrong in not realising that the constitution which he reverences to-day is no primitive thing ordained by Christ, but the growth of successive ages, and that the duty of our own age may be to recognise the value of some other framework which has proved equally valuable for preserving the same treasure ; but it is essential to those who approach the doctrine in a critical and hostile spirit to realise that the reason that it is dear to many is because they see the very real danger to the very heart of Christian experience, when we lay hands irreverently and rashly upon its protective coverings. Continuity of government is certainly one of those protective coverings. It is not one of the least ; and it is because Anglo-Catholics believe that the traditional and sacramental life of the Church has been protected by the strict requirement of continuity in episcopal government, even when that continuity has come through a very precarious and irregular succession, that they attach to the requirement a value which seems to others to savour of superstition. Whether they are justified in thinking this rigid and mechanical kind of continuity of such value is of course open to question, but it is only fair to the supporters of the theory that

its opponents should realise that the particular kind of sacramental devotion which so many Christians value has not normally been preserved where the historic episcopate has been abandoned. This may be a significant fact, or it may not ; to many Anglicans it is the chief reason for being remorseless in not recognising the ministry of non-episcopal Churches.

Let us grant all this, as indeed we ought to do most readily and completely. To lose continuity may be a great disaster. But is it necessarily a *fatal* disaster ? How do we feel when it is a nation which suffers the same loss ? Is it true that a nation which has lost all this, which has for adequate reasons scrapped its governing organ, and has been obliged to start *de novo* with a new administration, loses something absolutely vital to the life of the nation, so that it loses the right to claim identity with its past ?

Let us imagine, for instance, that the German people were to determine for sufficient reasons that its governing families were no longer tolerable, that for the future it needed a government founded upon the people's vote, and deriving its power from the mandate of the citizens ; would it therefore cease to be the German people, in any real sense ? Is it not conceivable that it might, if we were to suppose the failure of the government as now constituted to represent the highest interests of the people, be the only way of maintaining the life of the nation ? Granted that it is a disaster when such a choice has to be made, and that much is lost in the process of scrapping the old, and initiating the new, government, does it follow that the process may not be in the circumstances the best course



possible to pursue? May it not in some cases even revivify the nation?

I think that nearly all people, if we exclude the small and negligible number of the Legitimists of all countries, would allow that circumstances might easily be imagined when such a revolution would be the only means of a nation's salvation. Transmission of authority, we should say, is not the one thing needful. Continuity of language, of social customs, of literary traditions, of religious beliefs, of domicile—all these things are in reality more important and more determining factors in constituting identity than the transmission of government in a normal way.

Most people, I say, would acknowledge this to be true in regard to a nation. They would admit that a people might make a clean cut of its whole governing machinery for just reasons moving it to such a course, and, in spite of so great a disaster, might in the end be purified and renewed. But no inconsiderable number of people will say: "This, we grant, is true of a nation, but we do not admit that the same argument holds true of a Church. A Church exists in virtue of maintaining its governmental link with the past. When that is broken, the Church perishes, not necessarily immediately, but still as surely as a severed branch must ultimately wither and decay when cut away from the parent stem."

This opinion is based generally, I believe, on two arguments. First, that the Church has not, apart from its government, the same constituents to guarantee its continuous life as the nation possesses, and, secondly, that the life of the Church is not a natural growth

like the life of the nation ; that its life was impressed upon it by the fiat of Christ, and that this divinely-given law of its growth included the express provision of an unbroken chain of ministry. This law the Church is powerless to break without parting with the life with which it was endowed by its Divine Founder.

The first of these arguments rests upon the assumption that there is nothing in the life of the Church comparable to those deeply-seated facts which are constitutive in a nation's life. A nation speaks the same language, whatever its government may be, and by that fact alone its citizens are united to one another and severed from the world at large. A nation inhabits the same land, though its rulers change, and that land is full of hallowed places and things ; there are hills and valleys made famous by the nation's poets, fields where the nation's blood has been spilt in heroic encounters with the common foe, rivers along whose course the commerce of the people has passed up and down from an immemorial past ; a great heritage, too, there is of prose and verse, in which the people's history is set, its virtues idealised and its faults condoned by the filial piety of its sons. All this a nation has. But what of the Church ? The Church, people say, has no language. Its sons and daughters speak of their common Father in a thousand tongues. They cannot meet and converse without the mediation of an interpreter. The Church has no land that it can call its own. The sacred land of its birth lies waste under heathen rule. No ship carries the Church's flag ; no coin bears the image of Christ ; no soldiery the insignia of His Church. One bond of union, it is

argued, and only one, there is between Christian men in all ages and all lands—the government ordained by Christ. There alone you will find the vital essence which preserves this landless, homeless society as one body, possessed by one spirit. “Where the bishop is, there is Christ.”

To this argument we should reply that it is untrue that the Church lacks those essential constituents of unity which the nation possesses. Does not the Church possess in the Scriptures a literature greater than that of any nation, and one which marks it off from any other association of men? Is the life of Christ, and His abiding presence ministered by the Spirit, so nebulous and unreal a thing that it cannot create a unity as real as that of national life, or so weak that it cannot maintain in life that which it has created? Are the traditions of the Church less august than those of any other tribe, or the histories of its martyrs and heroes less noble and pathetic? If the Jewish race, torn from its native soil, bereft of government, its altars destroyed, its sacrifices utterly at an end, can maintain itself in unity, are we to say that the Church is so weakly constituted that if the chain of its government be broken its essential unity must be destroyed?

This would be indeed to say that the Church is less of a reality than the Socialist movement, less than Judaism, less than Islam, a society so weak in spirit that it cannot, if its government were to perish, rebuild itself by its own inherent spiritual vitality. We believe, on the contrary, that the indwelling Spirit, which comes to the Church from the Father, through Christ, is so

powerful and divine an influence that it far transcends every other bond of union, and that it is this Spirit which gives validity to every ministry and government, and not the government which ensures the presence and endowments of the Spirit. The two rivals which the Church most dreads to-day are materialistic Socialism and Islam. Yet neither movement depends for its vitality upon any hierarchy or law of official succession. Surely the Spirit of Christ, apart from any fixed government, can do for the Church what the spirit of Mahomet does for Islam.

But, it will be urged, we have reason to believe that our Lord Himself imposed upon the Church a certain form of government—a ministry (as some would say) of bishops, priests, and deacons, or (as others would say) a ministry of uncertain form, it is true, but such that within it are contained alone all the normal supplies of divine grace which can be corporately received, so that apart from this ministry, constantly renewed by co-option from within, grace cannot ordinarily be given. This ministry, it is believed, the Church cannot conceivably give up, and if given up, it could not reconstitute afresh.

Against this theory, whether taught in its cruder or its more scholarly form, we would urge first that it is exceedingly improbable that any religious teacher would ever give such a power to any corporate body, but exceedingly likely, from all that we know of the history of religions, that such a body would lay claim to have received such a power. Can we imagine any religious reformer to-day entrusting the carrying out of his ideas to a committee with the sole right to

interpret his views and to carry out his teaching for all time, so that no other society might claim any spiritual succession from him, except those who could show their letters patent from the original committee? Would Browning have wished to be interpreted to all time by the Browning Society, or have laid down, however carefully he might have chosen the original members, that no persons except the lawful successors of this original committee should be reckoned to have power to teach in his name? Would any artist, if he were not a very mediocre artist, wish to commit the future of art in this country to the Royal Academy, however carefully that body may have originally been chosen? Is it not highly improbable that Jesus Christ should have ever intended thus to tie up the constitution of the society which was to carry on His work in the world?

This would remain true, even if the original Apostolate had been composed of persons of marvellous religious powers and endowed with extraordinary judgment of character, capable of choosing the best possible successors, a power by no means always coincident with great spiritual attainments. But as a matter of fact we have reason to think that the Apostles were men of no special spiritual discernment. One of them, we know, was a complete failure; about the others we clearly see that they constantly misunderstood their Master, that they deserted Him in the crisis of His fate, and that St. Paul found their advice, to his evident surprise, of little or no value. Otherwise their career is lost in obscurity. Whether they exercised any influence on the development of the Church we are

never likely to know. Surely the more one thinks over this hypothesis, the less probable does it seem that Christ should have committed the future of His teaching to such a body. But it is never wise to allow ourselves to be guided by *a priori* reasonings as to the probable line of teaching or policy of a great world teacher. We shall be wiser if we consult the evidence. The evidence usually given in popular religious manuals consists of a few very doubtful texts. In the concluding chapter of St. Matthew, which few critics would consider to possess first-rate historical value, our Lord is reported to have said: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." This promise, which we may well believe to have been actually given in some such words as those recorded by St. Matthew, was given to the disciples in general, and can surely not by any ingenuity be twisted into a formal ministerial commission given to the Apostles, or into a promise of infallibility addressed even to the Church at large, much less to a selected few. Again in St. John xx we are told that when the whole body of the disciples, probably including the women, were met together (there is nothing, as Dr. Westcott has remarked, to show that only the Eleven were present),<sup>1</sup> our Lord is reported to have said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven them, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." Here again there is surely no possible ground, even if we take the Gospel of St. John as having primary historical value, for the assertion

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Gore disagrees with Westcott on this point; *v.* "Orders and Unity," p. 91.



that our Lord singled out these men and women as having power given them by Him to exercise, and to transmit to others, a governmental ministry. What other evidence is there? There is evidence enough, indeed, to show that a ministry quickly grew up, and that in course of time it tended to assume one type, and that, most probably, as was natural, the ministry was appointed in the first instance by those who were the accredited leaders of the society; but what evidence is there that our Lord ever ordained, or expected, that this ministry should be of necessity transmitted in an unbroken chain, or that, whatever its treasons and shortcomings and sins might be, no person was ever to seek to supersede it.

It has been argued indeed that a constitution so settled and rigid in its form as the Christian ministry tended to become could not have developed so rapidly if it had not been ordained, and its outlines, at least, constituted, by our Lord Himself. It was possible, perhaps, for people to argue like this before the present war. No one, surely, will contend in future that a tradition, for the truth of which eye-witnesses can be readily produced, may not grow up in a very few weeks in a congenial soil, or that regulations and ministries and departments and officials may not come into being with the rapidity of the mushroom, in a time of revolutionary ferment. No one, surely, will argue again that, in the absence of evidence, we must *assume* that our Lord laid down a fixed ministry and a doctrine of Apostolic succession because we find such a ministry and the beginnings of such a doctrine a whole generation after His death. If we found it ten years after,

it would not be a conclusive argument, in the absence of more cogent evidence.

It is a fact almost incredible, and one which those who are unacquainted with the life of the Church will hardly believe, that great numbers of people are being taught to-day, on the authority of these texts, that our Lord constituted a fixed and unalterable ministry, and that we cannot with any certainty obtain the benefits of His presence and spiritual sustenance or the forgiveness of sins, apart from it, and that no body of Christians can claim to be a Church which cannot thus trace back the pedigree of its ministers to this original fount, and such people seem never to have been told by their teachers that these texts can be otherwise interpreted.

We ought, however, to examine this theory of the Church, not as it may be taught in its cruder form, but as it is set forth by its greatest defenders. The modern exposition of the doctrine of the necessity for Apostolic succession is best given by Dr. Gore, one of the most beloved and honoured teachers in the Anglican Church, in his book "Orders and Unity."

"The Church," he says, "was held together from the first inwardly by the Holy Spirit, and outwardly by a ministry of divine authority, entrusted by Jesus Christ to His twelve Apostles, with others perhaps who were not of the number of the twelve, and by them transmitted, with the laying on of hands and prayer, to other men, as need arose, in different grades of office, and by these in turn to their successors; so that in each generation there have been men in the Church who have received, in due succession from the

Apostolic founders of the Church, the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, and amongst them men holding a ministry in chief which carried with it authority to impart the ministry to others. This ministerial succession rests upon the original institution of Christ in principle, but was developed at each step under the 'binding' and 'loosing' authority of the Church, to which He gave divine sanction."<sup>1</sup>

"All Christians recognise that there are fundamental elements in the Church which are not within the Church's legislative power: which come out of the region anterior to, and higher than, its own historical life: which were given it or imposed upon it by the authority of Christ its Founder. Such elements are the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, and the ordinance of monogamy, and the authority of the Old Testament scriptures: amongst these elements—I contend—is the ministry, if not in form, yet in principle and authority."<sup>2</sup>

This conclusion Dr. Gore rests upon the testimony of the Acts to the peculiar position of authority assigned to the twelve, to the charge given to St. Peter (Matt. xvi), and to the charge given to "the disciples" (whom he identifies with the Apostles) in St. John xx, 22, 24. The claim so vehemently urged by St. Paul to a like apostleship, which he had not received from other Apostles, he refers to a similar appointment supernaturally received, and in regard to those who, while not of the number of the twelve, are called apostles, he says: "How did they get their authority? and what precisely was it? We must frankly confess that we cannot at all certainly or fully answer the question."

<sup>1</sup> "Orders and Unity," p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 84.

But he inclines to suppose that they also must have received it from our Lord.

I cannot help thinking that, after reading the evidence of the New Testament, most people will feel that the claim which Dr. Gore makes that a definite ministry, entrusted, in regard to its continuance, to a divinely appointed body of men, is one which is far too tremendous to be admitted on evidence so slender and so ambiguous. If we were to say that our Lord gave to the disciples power to rule their own society through the exercise of the Holy Spirit during the interval before His return; that amongst these disciples the Apostles, and others closely associated with our Lord, quite naturally took the lead in this exercise of government; that St. Paul's example would lead us to suppose that a man who had felt a divine commission and who could show by his labours that this commission was justified by its results might claim apostleship along with those more regularly appointed; that, in course of time, through stages of which we can never have precise knowledge, the procedure for appointment of ministers became regularised in accordance with the teaching of experience, we should be going, so I cannot but feel, as far in the direction in which Dr. Gore would have us go as the evidence would warrant. The upshot of a study of all the evidence is, I believe, very clearly expressed, for most people, in Mr. Rawlinson's admirable essay in "Foundations":<sup>1</sup>

"No doubt the germs of institutionalism were present in the Church from the first: no

<sup>1</sup> Page 408.

doubt the Apostles in particular enjoyed a large measure of prestige and personal authority, both as being the authentic witnesses of the Lord, and also as being the 'begetters in Christ' of their own spiritual children. Nevertheless, speaking broadly, it is probable that we ought to see in early Christianity what we may roughly call a *pre-institutional* phase or movement, a great prophetic outpouring of the Spirit, which overflowed all regular channels, and had as yet no fixed and uniform organisation or institutional embodiment. The crystallisation of what was at first formless or only loosely institutional into fixed and definite Church order and regular form was a later, though an early and an inevitable, development."

And of the theory of which Dr. Gore is the most eminent exponent Mr. Rawlinson well says :

"Now, it may be fairly said, with regard to this whole method of approaching the subject, that the resultant position is one of stalemate. In its strictest and most traditional form the theory of an original Apostolical succession has perhaps broken down ; but the liberalised restatement of it, which is to be found in the writings of Duchesne and Battifol abroad and the present Bishop of Oxford at home, is at least a tenable interpretation of the evidence as viewed in the light of certain antecedent presuppositions. It is not, however, likely in the nature of the case to carry conviction to those who do not approach the evidence with the presuppositions in question ; for though a view with which the facts are compatible, it is not one which they necessitate."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Foundations," p. 383.

It is, in fact, very uncertain whether our Lord had contemplated the lapse of any appreciable interval between His first and second coming, and we have therefore no certain evidence as to what form of government He would have instituted if He had contemplated such a long history as the Church has in fact experienced. We may, and we should, I think, realise that the actual development which we know is on the whole a mark of divine ordering and the work of the Holy Spirit, but if we admit that so great a development from such obscure germs is an evidence of divine ordering, so may be also a further development by which the Church at large may resume authority which it has delegated, or create or recognise new ministries not previously existing.

The evidence then, even as stated by so careful and learned and persuasive a writer as Dr. Gore, of the foundation by Christ of a rigid and exclusive governing class or order in the Church will not convince those who have not a strong predisposition to believe it. But probably none of us come to the evidence without some expectations as to what is likely to have happened. It does surely seem to many of us very unlikely from what we know of the other teaching of Christ that He would so have tied up His teaching as to have restricted the government of His society in such a way that no one could belong to His Body who was not in communion with the very fallible successors of His original Apostles. The evidence leads us, as Mr. Rawlinson suggests, to a stalemate ; but if that is the conclusion of the evidence dispassionately considered, I would contend that there is every reason to think that our Lord would do what



a wise leader of a new movement would do to-day, if he expected to leave the society he had founded. He would designate some of his most experienced followers as the best leaders of his people. He would charge them earnestly to feed the flock, but he would certainly not give them *carte blanche* to fill their own positions for all eternity, so that no one could enter the society except with the sanction of their successors. This would seem to be in ordinary affairs a procedure lacking in wisdom, and we have every reason to suppose that our Lord was not very tender to the claims of official hierarchies or ancient corporations. It seems unlikely that He would found another of the same kind. We are surely not justified in assuming that He who said that it was vain to rest spiritual claims on descent from Abraham, because God could, if He chose, raise up the stones to be children of Abraham, that He who said that if His Body were destroyed He could in three days build a new one made without hands, would be likely to lead men to believe that His teaching and His Spirit could only survive under one particular and predetermined form, which, once broken, could never be reconstituted. Rather, surely, we should suppose that He taught that the Spirit would always be creative of form; and that as one form perished other forms would be built up.

We should conclude then that the continuous life of the Church depends not upon the transmission of offices of government, but upon a great variety of factors which, taken together, constitute the life of the body. It is impossible to lay down precisely and definitely all the criteria of a true Church, or to say

when, and at what instant, a Church may become, or cease to be, a true Church. The life consists partly in a common literature, but it is not absolutely essential that the Canon of Scripture should in every branch of the Church be absolutely the same : it consists partly in a common belief, but it is not necessary that there shall be the same number of "Creeds" in every Church, or that the belief shall be expressed in any definite formula at all. (The primitive Church did not possess any universally recognised formula of faith.) It consists again partly in mystical ordinances or sacraments, but the eternal truths expressed in sacraments need not of necessity be expressed in exactly the same ceremonies. It is expressed partly in forms of government. But behind all these criteria there is the one informing principle, the Spirit of Christ Himself, and where that is, there is the Church. We shall "know it by its fruits. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."

If it be objected that, if we accepted this position, we should be left in constant doubt as to whether we were to recognise this or that Christian body as a Church or not, we should reply that this fear arises from our distrust of the reality of the Spirit. The Spirit, and the Spirit alone, can tell us whether a body claiming to be a Church is a Church indeed. No existing body is a complete manifestation of the Jerusalem which is above, which is the mother of us all. To that one true Church alone our complete and unreserved loyalty is due. To every earthly embodiment of this perfect ideal a loyalty indeed is due, but

one conditioned by our knowledge that the Church on earth is like a net full of fish, bad as well as good. We must beware lest we bow down and worship the net. No visible society of Christians satisfies all the requisites of a Church ; none, as we hope, is wholly bereft of them. We are saved, not by membership in a visible Church, but by the Love of God, which normally must be ministered to us through a visible Church. In so far as any Christian society brings us into fellowship with the Spirit of Christ, so far to us it is a true Church.

We shall then ask about any society claiming to be a true Church of Christ : “ Does it manifest His Spirit ? Does it provide for the nourishment of His people ? Does it provide guarantees for the permanent transmission of the Christian ideals of life ? ” In so far as it does, it is a true Church. Thus, after the same method, a modern statesman deals with the revolutionary government of another nation. He does not proceed to inquire whether the *de facto* government can claim any continuity with the government of the past. With that he has no concern. He does not unroll the pedigree of the new monarch, that he may discover some kinship, real or imagined, between him and the sovereigns of ages past. He will not ask by whose authority the rulers acquired their title to rule. No ; he is only concerned with the ability of the *de facto* sovereign to give pledges for orderly and just government, that the new *régime* can make good its claim to represent the nation, that it can show a reasonable prospect of being able to carry on fraternal relationship with other nations. If it can certainly

do this, then its validity is established. If it cannot, then no claim to be connected with the past authority of the country can make it tolerable.

So He who, when He was asked whether He were indeed the Christ or not, referred the inquirers to the works which He did, He who refused to say by what authority He taught, or who gave Him that authority, would, we may well believe, if He were asked whether this or that man or woman, who claimed to be an ordained minister of His, were validly ordained or not, again tell men to judge them by their power of converting men to God, and if asked whether any society were a part of His Church would bid men judge it by its works, by its power of bringing disciples to Him and loosing them from the bondage of sin. We may indeed paraphrase the old maxim "*Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*" by saying that where men are finding salvation they cannot be outside the Church.

If we believe this teaching to be true, by far the greatest barrier to the reunion of Christendom will have been removed. Some of the practical results of such a belief will be shown in the next Essay.

IX

PRACTICABLE STEPS TOWARDS  
REUNION

BY THE REV. HAROLD ANSON

## SYNOPSIS

There is no lack of good-will in regard to reunion.

But the Free Churches cannot be expected to take any steps which cast doubt upon the validity of their ministries.

Our own Anglican Reformers explicitly recognised non-episcopal ordinations.

Roman Catholics have held that a presbyter could be ordained by presbyters, duly authorised to do so by the supreme authority in the Church.

The Anglican Church therefore is not tied to the non-recognition of these ministries.

Their recognition would not necessarily involve identity of forms and ceremonies, or any change in our standards of doctrine or of ceremonial.

Would it tend to the disruption of the Anglican Church, or delay reunion with Rome and the Oriental Churches ?

Our course must not be directed by opportunism, but by our belief that loyalty to Christ's teaching concerning the Church will create unity among His followers.

It is not the poor but the rich who are easily scandalised by toleration.

Christ's requirements were simple and concerned character rather than status. A return to His teaching is the one safe policy for His Church.



## PRACTICABLE STEPS TOWARDS REUNION

THE arguments used in the last Essay against the necessity of the Apostolic Succession for the validity of the Christian ministry will seem very old and trite to any non-Anglican who may happen to read it. It will be difficult for some to believe that anyone could think otherwise. To many, perhaps to the great majority of Anglicans, they may seem revolutionary and unsound.

If the argument of the Essay be accepted as true (that the life of the Church does not depend upon any particular unbroken chain of mechanical transmission of the priesthood), there will be no insurmountable barrier, such as exists to-day, to the reunion of the whole non-Roman English-speaking Christian world.

There is, at this moment, an unmistakable good will and desire for reunion. The will is not wanting, but the way is blocked by this belief, which, as we hope to have demonstrated, rests on a not altogether secure foundation.

Already there are signs that the rigid *non possumus* attitude of the traditionalist school is breaking down. Mr. Lacey, for instance, in his recent work, "Unity and Schism," has investigated the question of the reunion of Christendom in a temper of mind and with

an amount of learning which will surely secure him a favourable hearing among all Christian people. And his treatment of the subject is one which is extremely significant coming from the quarter from which such sympathetic and understanding treatment has not always come. Mr. Lacey points out how all theories of Church Unity, those based upon a Papacy, upon Episcopacy, and upon Independency, have alike broken down, and proved powerless to re-unite the Church. He sees that a merely federal reunion in which each denomination remained apart would not by itself bring that full reunion in love and truth and common worship that we all desire, and that this can only be brought about by the acknowledgment of our already existing common union in the Body of Christ through the instrumentality of the Spirit. But if we have come to realise that the power by which this existing union is achieved is the Spirit of God, working with only qualified success through Papacy, bishops, and denominational connections, and sometimes in spite of them, then we shall at least cease to regard the absence of ministerial pedigree as a fatal barrier to mutual recognition. This barrier removed, there might still be the barriers of heresy, of vested interests, of strong conviction that some particular Ordering is for the *bene esse* of the Church, of mutual dislike : and no alteration of view as to the ministry could in itself remove all these causes of alienation. But our present position in regard to many Christian bodies is that we have already got a sufficient basis in love and mutually acknowledged truth to enable us to eat with them, to study with them, to live with them, to pray with them,

and we are only kept away from full communion by our doubt concerning the validity of their ministry. The removal of that doubt would not in itself achieve unity, but it would at least remove one great difficulty in the way. At present, love and the desire for reunion dash themselves in vain against this hard rock of the non-recognition by Anglicans of a non-episcopal ministry. For we cannot expect that the Free Churches will accept the well-intended offer of the Anglican Church that the present non-episcopally ordained ministers of the Free Churches shall be recognised as licensed lay preachers, but that future ministers shall be episcopally ordained. The same difficulty will probably bar the way which made it impossible for St. Paul to acquiesce in the Judaistic compromise that the Gentile Galatians should submit to the rite of circumcision in order to heal the schism between Jewish and Gentile Christians. St. Paul felt that if the Galatian Gentiles gave way to those who believed that grace came through circumcision and the keeping of the Law, they would not merely have made a deplorable error of judgment, and a serious tactical mistake, but that they would have denied Christ, and that He would, so far as they were concerned, have died in vain.<sup>1</sup> So Free Churchmen may well think that, if they are invited to be episcopally ordained, on the ground that sacramental grace depends for its security upon a ministerial pedigree, they have no choice but to decline the well-meant offer, so long as by so doing they are recognising a Judaistic conception of the ministry, and in all probability paving the way for

<sup>1</sup> Gal. ii, 21.

their children to grow up in a like error. They may well feel justified in holding that they have a real witness to give to the reality of divine grace and the true working of corporate life through a ministry which has sprung up by the working of the Spirit in the ordinary body of the faithful, raising up a priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, without lineage, and without any human authority but such as is derived from the prayers and the calling of the faithful. The ecclesiastical revolution which brought such a ministry into being may have been deplorable ; but it may be overruled by God for a witness, not lightly to be given up, to the true sources of ministerial authority. We cannot imagine St. Paul submitting to even a conditional consecration to his Apostolic office at St. Peter's hands, or allowing Timothy to do so. Nonconformist ministers, I should suppose, feel the same duty to uphold the full validity of their ministry which St. Paul evidently felt. Until the High Anglican theory of Apostolic succession *as a necessity* to the Church be abandoned, we can scarcely suppose that any compromising of the position of Free Churchmen will be allowed. When the doctrine of the necessity of a mechanical succession is abandoned, it is most unlikely that Episcopal ordination will be any further source of division.

I find it very difficult to understand the position of Anglicans who contend that the Church of England did not at the Reformation assert itself to be essentially one of the Churches of the Reformation, allied with the Reformed Churches of the Continent, and recognising their ministry, definitely abolishing " the Mass " and

returning to the primitive conception, as they believed it to be, of the Communion. It is easy to understand the position of those who would deeply regret this course of conduct as a deplorable error, like Mr. Keble, who said, "Anything which separates the present Church from the Reformers I should hail as a great good," but it is very difficult to understand how anyone can deny that it happened. Thus Hooker ("Eccles. Pol." VII, ch. xiv, 11), writing in 1593, says: "There may be sometimes very just and sufficient reasons to allow ordination made without a bishop. The whole Church visible, being the true original subject of all power, it hath not ordinarily allowed any other than bishops to ordain; how be it, as the ordinary course is ordinarily in all things to be observed, so it may be in some cases not unnecessary that we decline from the ordinary ways." "Where the Church must needs have some ordained, and neither hath, nor can have, possibly a bishop to ordain; in case of such necessity, the ordinary institution of God hath given oftentimes and may give place." "And therefore we are not simply without exception to urge lineal descent of power from the Apostles by continued succession of bishops in every effectual ordination." Richard Field in 1606 ("Of the Church," II, xxxix) says: "Who then dare condemn all those worthy ministers of God that were ordained by presbyters, in sundry Churches of the world, at such times as bishops, in those parts where they lived, opposed themselves against the truth of God, and persecuted such as professed it?"

Bishop Hall remarks: "The sticking at the admission of our brethren returned from the Reformed Churches

was not in the case of ordination but of institution ; they had been acknowledged ministers of Christ without any other hands laid upon them ; but according to the laws of our land, they were not, perhaps, capable of institution to a benefice unless they were so qualified as the statutes of this realm do require." "I know those, more than one, that by virtue of that ordination which they have brought with them from other Reformed Churches, have enjoyed spiritual promotions and livings without any exception against the lawfulness of their calling." The Act of Parliament of 1570 provided that all ministers ordained by other than Anglican formularies should subscribe to the Articles, but there is no question of re-ordination. Bishop Burnet thus notes the change made in 1662 by the Act of Uniformity : "Those who came to England from the foreign Churches have not been required to be ordained among us ; but now all that had not episcopal ordination were made incapable of holding any ecclesiastical benefice." Archbishop Bramhall, in consenting to re-ordain some of the Scottish clergy who were not satisfied with their presbyterian orders, inserted in the letters of Orders this clause : "*non annihilantes priores ordines (si quos habuit) nec invaliditatem eorundem determinantes, multo minus omnes ordines sacros ecclesiarum forinsecarum condemnantes (quos proprio Judici relinquimus) sed solummodo suppletentes quicquid prius defuit per canones Ecclesiae Anglicanae requisitum.*"

Bishop Cosin bears witness : "If at any time a minister so (*i.e.* by presbyters) ordained in these French Churches, came to incorporate himself in ours, and to



receive a public charge or cure of souls among us in the Church of England (as I have known some of them to have so done of late, and can instance in many other before my time), our bishops did not re-ordain him before they admitted him to his charge, as they must have done if his former ordination here in France had been void."

Tillotson proposed that, for the future, "none be capable of any ecclesiastical benefice or preferment in the Church of England that shall be ordained in England otherwise than by bishops. And that those who have been ordained only by presbyters, shall not be compelled to renounce their former ordination. But because many have, and do still doubt of the validity of such ordination, where episcopal ordination may be had, and is by law required, it shall be sufficient for such persons to receive ordination from a bishop in this or the like form: 'If thou art not already ordained, I ordain thee.' " Archbishop Wake, himself a zealous and learned High Churchman, said: "I should be unwilling to affirm, that where the ministry is not episcopal there is no Church, nor any true administration of the Sacraments. And very many there are among us who are zealous for episcopacy, and yet dare not go so far as to annul the ordinances of God performed by any other ministry."

The truth seems to be that while almost all the typical Anglican divines recognised the ordinations performed by the Continental Protestant presbyteries, and, if they required re-ordination, did so merely in order to conform to the law of the State, their singular bitterness towards the "sectaries" at home led

them, mainly owing to the intense political hatreds engendered by the Civil Wars, to an ever narrower position in regard to non-episcopal ordination everywhere.

Our Reformers were perfectly well aware that the prevalent opinion in the Roman Church was then, as it is now, that there is no special Order of Bishops to which is conveyed a separate grace, but that bishops are priests or presbyters, given by the Church a special jurisdiction and commission, but not a special *character*. “*Episcopalis potestas dependet a sacerdotali: qui nullus potest recipere episcopalem potestatem nisi prius habeat sacerdotalem. Ergo episcopatus non est ordo.*”<sup>1</sup> Dom Morin has in recent days given a long list of canonists who hold that the Pope, as representing the Church, can give permission to any presbyter to ordain presbyters. “Rosellus teaches<sup>2</sup> that ‘the Pope may give commission to presbyters to confer all sacred Orders, even minor Orders,’ and in this I stand with the opinion of the canonists.” Our Reformers were not therefore making an innovation in holding that the

<sup>1</sup> S. Thomas Aq. Summa, Qu 40 a5. Ordo, prout est sacramentum imprimens characterem, ordinatur specialiter ad sacramentum Eucharistiae, in quo ipse Christus continetur: quia per characterem ipsi Christo configuramur. Et ideo, licet detur aliqua potestas spiritualis episcopo in sui promotione respectu aliquorum sacramentorum, non tamen illa potestas habet rationem characteris. Et propter hoc, episcopatus non est ordo, secundum quod ordo est sacramentum quoddam. Potestas episcopalis non est tantum jurisdictionis, sed etiam ordinis, ut ex dictis patet, secundum quod ordo communiter accipitur.—S. Thom. Aq: Summa Th., Pars III. . Quaest: XL., Art. V.

This and other quotations to the same effect are given in Briggs’ “Church Unity.”

<sup>2</sup> De pot: Imperatoris et Papae pt iv. cap 16.

Church could, if necessity arose, commission presbyters to ordain presbyters : they only differ from the Roman position in holding that the Assembly or the Sovereign represented the Church, and not the Pope.

Cosin, himself a strong High Churchman, testifies that it was not the custom of the Church of England to re-ordain ministers of the Reformed Churches when they accepted cures in the Church of England. " And I love not to be herein more wise, or harder than our own Church is ; which hath never publicly condemned and pronounced the ordinations of the other Reformed Churches to be void, as it doth not those of the unreformed Churches neither among Papists." <sup>1</sup>

An interesting example of the practice of the Church in recognising the validity of the ordinations in the Reformed Churches has lately been discovered by the Dean of Norwich, viz., the institution of De Laune to the parish of Redenhall in the diocese of Norwich on the presentation of the Archbishop of Canterbury. " Mr. Petrus de Laune, sacrae Theol : professor Rector ordinatus presbiter per doctores et professores Collegii de Leyden 26 Junii 1599." Per Franciscum, epum Norwic. 12 Nov. 1629 Institutus. <sup>2</sup>

The exiled bishops and clergy during the period of the Commonwealth communicated gladly with the Calvinist Churches in France and the Netherlands, and

<sup>1</sup> For this and subsequent quotations I am indebted to the Bishop of Hereford's " Robert Lee Lecture."

<sup>2</sup> It appears, however, that Mr. de Laune at a subsequent date when Rector of the parish of Redinghall was " co-opted into the sacred order of deacons and priests according to the ritual of the Anglican Church," probably in order to comply with the law of the land in regard to institution.

many accepted office in them, as Durel, Brevint, and Basire. "I do profess," said Archbishop Usher, "that with like affection I should receive the Blessed Sacrament at the hands of the Dutch Ministers, if I were in Holland, as I should at the hands of the French Ministers, if I were at Charenton." Denis Grenville, Dean of Durham and son-in-law of Bishop Cosin, in examining penitents, before giving absolution, asked them: "Do you believe the Reformed Churches of Christendom the Churches of Christ, and parts of the Holy Catholic Church, wherein the purest doctrine is professed, and the Sacraments of Our Lord are most duly ministered, of any other Churches in the world?" The penitent answered, "I do." As to communicating in foreign Protestant Churches, the Dean writes to a correspondent: "As to your communicating with them before you be in France, I conceive it your duty, considering the circumstances we have been in, and are in, and like to be very much more to edification, and possibly it may be more to your comfort than some holy solemn practices in your own Church have been, because in receiving here you must exercise some extraordinary graces, you having many temptations to the contrary, even to disown, neglect, nay despise them which are true members of Christ and who some of the best men of our own have countenanced."

It is indeed true that, even before the Civil Wars had hardened and intensified the differences between the episcopal and non-episcopal Churches, there are not many certain instances of the recognition of non-episcopal ordination. After the Restoration, when political passions had come to reinforce ecclesiastical

prejudice, it would be hard to find one instance at all. Still there has not been until quite recently a disposition to assert the *necessity* of episcopal ordination, otherwise than as a godly custom of the Church of England.

Now supposing that the Church of England were to revert to this view of non-episcopal ministries, which was characteristic, as we have seen, of its greatest divines, which it has since the Restoration tended to abandon, in part as the result of the violent ecclesiastical and political feuds of the seventeenth century, in part owing to the newly revived desire for greater unity with the ancient episcopally-governed Churches of the Continent, and if it is frankly allowed that the only test of a true ministry is to be found in its fruits, recognised and authorised by the Church, what practical results may we expect to flow from such a change of belief ?

It will not follow at all that any Church will abandon its own conception of Christian Doctrine, its traditional methods of conducting divine worship, or its ecclesiastical polity. The Church of England recognises the ministry of the Roman and Oriental Churches, but it does not on that account adopt the beliefs and customs of those Churches. Its members communicate with Old Catholics, but do not coalesce with them. The Anglican Church would still continue to believe that episcopal government, a fixed form of liturgical service, a certain measure of formal ritual, was part of the *bene esse* of the Church, not lightly to be surrendered. Nor would there be any reason to suppose that all societies claiming to be Churches would be held to

have established their claim to recognition, nor all ministries claiming to be regular and Christian be accepted as sufficiently accredited. No one supposes that the Mormon Church or the Seventh Day Adventists would be received as true Churches of Christ. In regard to some religious societies no very close relationships might be possible; with others again, a very full and cordial communion might be achieved, while each Church retained its own customs.

When it was generally recognised that our complete loyalty is due only to the Church invisible, that "blessed company of all faithful people," that company which our Lord recognises when He speaks of those who will be gathered together to Him at the "Last Day," some of whom have known Him, others of whom have never consciously known Him at all, but all of whom have followed and loved Him, then we should not suppose that either our own or any other Church completely satisfies all the requirements of the true Church, but we shall gratefully accept the measure of approximation which any Church attains, earnestly endeavouring to build our own Holy Place on earth after the pattern of the true and heavenly Tabernacle.

If then a demand were made for permission for reciprocal rights of communion between (let us say) the Presbyterian and Anglican Churches, the main question to be decided would be whether there was such a measure of agreement on the main Christian verities and ordinances, and as to the requirements of those who come to the Lord's Supper, and the benefits to be derived from it, as to make it desirable that there should be this fraternal sharing of the gifts.



A common partaking of Communion would then almost certainly be granted, officially, publicly, and universally, instead of, as is now the case, unofficially, secretly, and only in certain dioceses and parishes. At the present moment a Presbyterian resident in England may be warmly welcomed in one parish at the altar, tolerated at another, and indignantly repelled at a third. In place of this humiliating and unchristian treatment, there would be a true unashamed offering of Christian fellowship in brotherly love and trust. Again, a Wesleyan minister might ask to be allowed the privilege of celebrating the Holy Communion once a year in his own parish church for his own people, or might be invited to do so by the parish priest for the benefit of the whole body of the faithful on some occasion which called for a special act of corporate thanksgiving or mutual fellowship. The Church would then have to ask whether the minister was ordained in his own body to be a minister of Christ, for purposes which bore sufficient likeness to the conception which we hold in our Church of the ministry to make him a fitting minister of the Holy Sacrament. We should not inquire into the pedigree of his ordainers, we might quite be of the opinion that the followers of Wesley were in error in founding a ministry at all, but we should inquire only whether the Wesleyan ministry, as it now exists, exists for purposes which we can recognise to be cognate to those purposes for which our own ministry exists, and produces results which assure us of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of souls and the building up of the Church in Unity and Love. The Church might then decide

to recognise this ministry entirely, or for certain occasions, or provided certain educational tests were satisfied, or where the ministry of our own Church was not available, and this might lead the way in time to a much fuller recognition.

There can be little doubt that such a partial recognition would lead in time to such an approximation of views and customs that in a new generation something like a united Church of reformed Christians would arise. Already something which foreshadows it is arising. The younger generation is becoming accustomed to camp meetings, retreats, and conferences, in which members of all denominations take part. So great is the harmony of spirit, so unanimous the testimony to the great fundamental truths of religion, that the members forget that they belong to different Churches. In prayer, in praise, in study, all bear their witness to the same truths that they all have learnt. Only when a celebration of the Holy Communion is announced is there a division. Then, and only then, must Anglicans go to the right, and Free Churchmen to the left, to bear their witness this time to their denominational loyalties and to their historic feuds. The result of this can only be to bring the Eucharist into contempt and neglect, for it will be felt to be the one barrier to the unity of those whom the Spirit has welded together, so that, apart only from the Eucharist, they have but one heart and one mind. As in the days of Eli, men will come to abhor the offering of the Lord.

I remember an old clergyman of a generation which has now passed away saying that he had given as his

advice to his new and inexperienced bishop : “ My Lord, take my advice : whatever you do, keep off the Sacrament : you will find it a *very nasty* subject.” This old-fashioned dignitary of the Church expressed the thought which is likely to become common among the next generation if our present religious dissensions continue.

We may, however, have a good hope that the partial and tentative intercommunion, which will almost certainly become common, either (as we may fervently desire) with the express welcome of authority, but perhaps, less happily, by the unauthorised action of the new generation, impatient and driven into opposition by long delays, will ripen into the formation of a great federal Church, wherein considerable diversities in the expression of belief, in practice, and in traditions, will not be found inconsistent with a mutual toleration and recognition of the reality and validity of ministerial “ character ” within the large limits of the Church. The diversities of doctrine would, almost certainly, not be found greater than those already tolerated within the limits of the Church of England : the limits of ritual and order would necessarily be considerably greater. The growing practice, however, among religious people, of attending with tolerable frequency, and with great edification, the ministrations of other denominations than their own, suggests that the difficulty would not be so great as is generally conceived. In practice, no doubt, there would be a considerable number of people who would not desire ministrations other than those of their own Church, and would find as great a difficulty in attending them as

an extreme Anglo-Catholic would find in attending the evening Eucharist of his Evangelical neighbours, but there would be a very great gain in the acknowledgment that the Eucharist of the City Temple was as valid and regular as the Eucharist at Canterbury Cathedral (where the doctrine preached would be, quite possibly, of a more extreme Protestant character than at the City Temple).

“But what would be the price,” people will ask, “that you will have to pay for this enlargement of the Church’s boundaries? Will it not be too great to be worth paying?” We would answer that, in the first place, we have no right to be counting our possible gains and losses, if we are dealing with a matter of principle, of right and wrong. We are all too apt, in ecclesiastical matters, to adopt a policy of opportunism, which in the long run is almost always disastrous, because by doing so you shed the more earnest and intelligent, and retain, possibly, but not at all certainly, the unenthusiastic and the unintelligent.

To act on principle is, or ought to be, the obvious course for followers of Christ to take. What does the Spirit of Christ say? Would Christ recognise as regular and valid the ministry of the Protestant Churches? Would He Himself be present at their Eucharist? Did He set great store by transmitted authority and professional status?

If we are persuaded that Christ’s Spirit teaches us to act in the direction which I have indicated, we can safely leave the results to Him. It is, after all, His Church, not ours.

But we are not wrong in forecasting the results. We may suppose that some scores of clergy, chiefly in London, might either submit to Rome, or, as an *interim* measure, form an "Old Catholic" Church. They might be followed by a few hundreds, or perhaps even a few thousands, of men and women; but we should probably, almost at once, come into the closest communion with the host of scholars, teachers, missionaries and preachers of the Presbyterian and other free Churches. The loss of some of our Anglo-Catholic brethren would be a very sad one, for it might include some of our very best and most devoted workers; but it would not be all loss. The gain of being in full communion with all those whose teaching and help we have known in so many happy and inspiring conferences would be not a small or insignificant gain. Yet, once more, even if it were to mean all loss and no gain at all, St. Paul would have thought it worth while.

Some years ago, a well-known Roman Catholic writer could say, contemptuously, "Is it worth while for the Anglican Church to pay a high price for the friendship of Stiggins and Chadband?" That satire has lost its point to all those who have been with the great teachers of English and American Protestantism.

"Ah!" but I hear some saying, "you must consider the poor and ignorant. The scholarly and academic people can tolerate, no doubt, these differences of ritual and expression without danger, but the 'poor' would be immensely scandalised if a Methodist preacher were to celebrate the Sacrament, or a Congregationalist

were to preach in an Anglican Church." It is extraordinary how this legend has grown up that "the poor" are easily shocked by religious differences. The inhabitant of the villa, the reader of the denominational weekly paper, is easily shocked very often, but the "poor" are quite singularly, and, as their teachers often sadly remark, quite grossly, blind as to the differences in religion between good and kind people who name the name of Christ. To the great scandal of the wise and prudent in matters ecclesiastical, "the poor" insist upon sending their children to the Sunday school which is nearest, or which the children like, and on attending, if they attend anywhere, where they hear the best sermon. Assuredly "the poor" will not be scandalised at a more inclusive policy on the part of the Churches of Christ. They have, indeed, a tradition, very deeply rooted, of judging men by their fruits instead of by their claims, and they have good authority for this simple standard of judgment.

But perhaps we shall be told that such an enlargement of the Church will inevitably put off the great and distinctive work of the Church of England in mediating between the Roman and Oriental Churches on the one hand and the Protestant Churches on the other. This argument is surely a very doubtful one. As to the Oriental Churches, he would be a bold man who would prophesy what will be the outlook of these Churches ten years hence, or what form of Christianity will appeal to the newly educated democracies of Eastern Europe. The Russian Church at this moment, so we are told by the great Serbian divine Nicholas



Velimirovic, "stands, poor as Christ and rich as Christ before the world, ready to recognise all the truth and beauty in the Church of England and Rome, of Scotland and America, of all the Old Catholics and the New Catholics." It certainly does not look, at the moment, as though Russia were going to be easily shocked by a break with old traditions. In regard to the Roman Church, it is surely not the experience of those who know what scholarly and broad-minded Roman Catholics are thinking, that they set any great value upon our bishops' pedigrees, or our recently restored ritual, and newly recovered sacramental doctrine. A great, international, reformed missionary Church which included within it all that was best in the religious thought of the British Empire, the United States, Scandinavia, China, and Africa, and which was a *living* Church, in which a common life pulsed through the whole body, would almost certainly be an infinitely greater instrument for uniting the whole Christian world than our little State-ridden Anglican Establishment, with its relatively minute offshoots in English-speaking countries. The best Roman Catholics care very little for ritual and very little for antiquities, and less still for successions from little isolated groups of bishops, and very much more for a living voice speaking with the authority of the Spirit, for internationalism in religion, for an ordered diversity of religious expression, for missionary zeal and devotion to the people. This would be a far safer and more wholesome basis for reunion than an approximation to Roman ritual and practice. There is a real danger of Anglicans meticulously copying all the worst faults and manner-

isms of Rome, while Rome is steadily throwing them off, and of Anglicans finding that they are incurring the contempt of the most enlightened Romanists, while they strive in vain to gain the sympathy of the more conservative and least advanced sections of that great Church.

No Christian ought to be blinded to the magnificent achievements of Rome, both in the past and in the present, by preoccupation with her manifest defects. The Papacy is, after all, an incarnation of a great ideal. It represents, inadequately enough, no doubt, an ideal for which we are all seeking. It is the nearest approximation which we have to an international Christian Church. No reunion which neglected Rome could satisfy the religious mind. It is the heir of something much greater than Cæsarism. It is heir of the greatest of the world polities; it is the heir of one side, and that not the least, of the great Christian tradition. It gives still a noble witness against the subordination of the Church to Kings and Parliaments. Even if all that is said, both by Roman Catholics and also by Protestants, of the corruption of the Vatican be true, still there is surely the same kind of love binding us to Rome that binds us to Peter, the greatest of the Apostles. Yet it may be the duty of us, who stand rather in the tradition of St. Paul, to withstand Peter, as he did, out of loyalty to our common Master. We may not acquiesce in the faults and weaknesses of Peter in order to regain his regard. This is the present danger of one great school of Anglicanism. Let us copy the internationalism of Rome, the freedom from the State, the willingness to be poor, the mobility

which poverty brings, and so we may become partakers in the spiritual treasures of Rome ; but we shall not re-unite Christendom by copying the vices of Rome in the hope of securing her recognition of our position in Christendom.

But, indeed, this larger conception of Church unity must not be allowed to be based upon reasons of expediency. It may add, or perchance it may diminish, the numbers of Church adherents. That is not for us the governing consideration. It is advocated because we believe it to be quite clearly the principle laid down by Christ that those were to be recognised as His ministers who were able to make good before the Church their claim to be sent out by Him, and that claim was to be allowed or disallowed by the clear test of the power to cast out devils, to reclaim the sinner, to heal the sick, to bring in the Kingdom. The nearer we can approximate to such a standard of judgment, the more closely we believe we shall be following the pattern of Christ.

Baxter in 1691 addressed the Anglicans from whom he had separated thus :

“ Oh how little would it have cost your Churchmen in 1660 and 1661 to have prevented the calamitous and dangerous divisions of this land and the common danger thereby, and the hurt that many thousand souls have received by it. And how little would it cost them yet to prevent a continuance of it ! ”

This word of Baxter's remains true to-day. It must be the task of the younger Anglicans, and especially of those whose faith has been strengthened and

broadened by the fellowship and ministry of the Free Churches, and of all of us who have come to know all that their ministry means to the cause of the Kingdom, to do all in our power to promote this blessed return to a simpler and profounder conception of the ministry of Christ.

X

YOUTH AND THE BIBLE

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## SYNOPSIS

The prevalent interest in Religion—"Christianity at the Cross Roads"—The contribution of the School Scripture Lesson, its importance and its limitations—The Bible as the Book of Life and the meaning of life to youth—The rediscovery of the "Bible World" and its implications for Scripture teaching—Inspiration and its significance for Adolescents—The Concurrent Treatment of the Two Testaments—The Orientation of Religious Teaching.



## YOUTH AND THE BIBLE

TO-DAY we question life. A whole people reflects in varying degree upon the structure of society and the ends of life. Thus many turn to Religion and demand from it some contribution to the solution of their problems, some answer to their insistent questions. Awakening interest in Religion has been stimulated by the War, but it was a characteristic of our thought before 1914. The dawn of a fresh age in theological learning, the rise of new cults, the growth of the science of Comparative Religion, were indications of this revival; but with the War has come a more insistent and a more individual strain. Those things we most value in life we find are costly beyond our calculations. They can only be achieved or retained through sacrifice or death. Is it Beauty and variety of development, is it Love and Fellowship, or is it Truth and Freedom that we ultimately prize and pursue? For if the cost of the pursuit be overwhelming, must we not ask "Whence spring the roots of this Beauty, Love, and Truth? How can we be assured that we follow not phantoms but realities?"<sup>1</sup> The sacrifices of war have challenged our values, and thus thrown us back

<sup>1</sup> Cf. "The Ultimate Belief." Clutton-Brock.

on the search for some ultimate sanction for them. Now it is an essential of religion that it gives an objective to the highest objects of human pursuit, that it sets forth as a pledge of their essential sanity, and their final victory, the existence of a God of Beauty, Love, and Truth. Men and women are reflecting upon religion, and the future is bound up with the current which their reflections will take. Will the movement bear any relation to the life of the organised Churches, and being concentrated and focussed in fellowship gain impetus and directive force? Or will it lose itself in bogs and shallows, expending its energy in isolated speculation, weakened at the heart by those seducers of human purpose, magic and formalism?

It is a pregnant alternative. We have inherited a wealth of religious experience and wisdom from the past. Part we have assimilated, and thus given to it new direction and new form, but part we have kept lying by untouched. Of our five talents, some—how many? is it four or one?—we have invested in the broad fields of industrial and social life, and there we may trace their harvest rather than in developments within the Churches themselves. But some of them—is it one or four?—we have hidden in the earth and allowed them to remain inert, even decaying. Much now depends on whether we can use all the talents we possess, for, as it has been truly said, we are in a “state of spiritual poverty.” Can we then bring the religious wisdom and experience which we have inherited within the range of the ideas of masses of men? The Christian Gospel needs to be taken, as St. Paul took it in his day, straight into the busy

commercial and industrial centres, and into the depleted countryside, and to be made intelligible to all sorts and conditions of men. Can we do this ?

“The kingdom of God cometh not by observation,” and “In an hour that ye think not the Son of Man cometh.” Yet the waiting servant has his task, though it be a subordinate one. We may help to make the paths straight for the way of the Lord. In this paper we are concerned only with one issue—the religious instruction of young children, particularly the teaching of the Bible ; but here are wide opportunities for service. In the present general challenge of values the religious instruction commonly given to children has not escaped censure. It is accused of narrowness and sterility ; its results are said to be meagre and not seldom depressing. But in so far as it suffers from intellectual apathy it does not suffer alone. Clear thinking in religion is but rarely demanded from us nor do we often demand it from others. Thus the large majority of men and women retain in maturity the religious outlook of children. Their beliefs are too often unassimilated, and they tend to regard them as conventions, or heirlooms, or as a solace in time of trouble. They are thus drawn towards ideas or methods which appear new, and attract by their appeal to surface emotions ; they do not easily undertake the examination of any body of thought, or philosophy of life. But the value of a religious belief lies in its exacting power over the whole nature—the affections, the intellect, and the will. Religion, in fact, which used to be in intimate contact with the intellectual life of the time, is now somewhat divorced or aloof from it.

Why is this? Partly, no doubt, because we are, in this age, uncertain of our formulas. Thought has moved swiftly. The centre of gravity has shifted in almost every department of knowledge. New ways of understanding life lay at the heart of the great movements and discoveries of the nineteenth century, and we cannot yet synthesise them into one way. In proportion as we feel "Religion's all or nothing, stuff o' the very stuff, life of life, and self of self," we fail to express our beliefs succinctly when all aspects of life are taking on a new significance. Whatever the underlying reasons may be, the religious beliefs of the average man are undoubtedly isolated from the advance of his general knowledge. We have passed the stage when the pursuit of truth was regarded as antagonistic to the growth of faith, but we have not yet thought out the conception that it is an integral part of it.

Along these lines the teaching of Scripture in schools may be approached and examined. Such teaching can make but a modest contribution to the solution of a large problem, but it can be a real factor in harmonising the intellectual and the religious development of young people, and thus remove many of the difficulties which now confront us. Let the limitations of such work be first remembered. We are considering the work of schools, but in the religious education of a young boy or girl the scope of the Church and of the family is wider and more intimate. Again, to teach Scripture is not to give a religious education, that is a deeper and a more pervasive thing. "The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh, or whither

it goeth : so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." We may be "found of God" in the Book of His Works, as in the Book of His Word, through Science, Art, or Literature. The set lesson may be the least of many influences : the greatest of these may be unconscious to those who receive as to those who impart them. Moreover, a religious faith—the end of a religious education—is an affair of the whole personality. The faith of an individual must be built up slowly out of the action and interaction of thought and experience. Yet faith must in a very real sense precede knowledge, for in Religion as in Science, we can only verify and test and prove when we have made a venture of faith and believe that the assumption will bear the weight of investigation. "*Credo ut intelligam.*" By Scripture teaching we may impart and nourish ideas which may prove the starting-point of faith, and which further knowledge and experience may test and verify. Its contribution may be measured by the power of these ideas to guide thought and action.

How far has the teaching of the Bible in schools made a sound contribution to the intellectual content of religious education ? What position is taken by the Bible, to-day, in the religious life of the majority of the nation ? Probably it is as much an intellectual hindrance to some as it is a devotional help to others. In his "Thoughts on Religion at the Front," Neville Talbot gives current conceptions of the Bible as one of the greatest stumbling-blocks to religion which is met by the more thoughtful men in the Army. How has the Bible become a stumbling-block ? By our general failure, surely, to bring to bear on it our

knowledge and experience. We have allowed it to drift away from our main intellectual interests and to stagnate in isolation. In the pursuit of truth many have passed it by, even regarding it as an obstacle which must be put aside or avoided. Consequently, our common presentation has been dull, and has lacked life and power. It is a commonplace that the majority of our boys and girls grow up to regard the Bible as a dull book. If we have no philosophy of life, or if it be antagonistic to that set forth by the Bible, it must remain for us, and for our pupils, a dull and isolated book.

Our teaching then must have life—an indefinable quality. Thring defined teaching as “the transmission of the living through the living to the living.” Now the supreme concern of the Bible is life, divine life, human life. In no literature are the depths and the heights of life and its infinite variety more boldly explored. How can we transmit that quality of life from this book of life? What does life mean to the child? Movement, action, discovery. “Deprive not the child of the sacred right of discovery,” said Pestalozzi: sacred because discovery is an essential of life to the young inhabitant of an unexplored world. In the record of God’s revelation to man contained in the Bible there is discoverable just that principle of change and growth which marks all living knowledge and is associated with all forms of life. There is no unity of moral teaching, or of theological doctrine, or of literary form. The Sermon on the Mount is not further removed in spirit from the Book of Leviticus than the drama of the Song of Solomon is distinct in form from the straightforward narrative of the Book of Kings.



But the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews concentrates in simple words that underlying philosophy of revelation which draws together into a living unity this varied collection of works. "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son."

Immense evil has been done in the past by our constant inability to distinguish with real conviction between the divers portions and the divers manners in which men have heard the voice of God's revealing. "Ye know not what spirit ye are of," said Christ to James and John when they would have appealed to the God of Elijah to send down fire upon unfriendly villagers. So too do we constantly forget. The God of the Old Testament is often a challenge to the conscience of a growing child. His recoil from the God of Joshua, who bade Achan's children suffer death, from the God of Moses, who hardened Pharaoh's heart, marks the precious awakening of the religious consciousness within him. To fail to give him, here, a clear understanding appropriate to his age of the different stages of religious insight shown within the Old Testament itself and of the distinction between the Old and the New Covenants is to forbid, so far as in us lies, the approach of that little one to Christ. It has been a spurious reverence in the past that has encouraged teachers to drain off characters and incidents in the Bible narrative from the devious flowing stream of human history and experience which it portrays, and to make of them examples and precepts of Christian life and doctrine. The flowing stream has thus become a

Dead Sea of stagnant and bitter waters. Balaam's ass, Jonah's whale, Pharaoh's heart have established themselves in the memories of hundreds as the symbols of a religion they have never been taught to think out, and of a faith they have not been encouraged to explore. Thus we have denied the principle of life, and been blind to that wonderful progressive response to the self-manifestation of God which passed like a great tidal wave of spiritual experience through the history of Israel and broke on the day of Pentecost over the shores of the whole world.

In order that life may be transmitted from the Bible by the teacher to his scholars, it is essential that the Books which compose it be read in the light of the general history of the times in which they were written. Too often the Bible is shut off in thought within the narrow limits of a world peculiar to itself, which has no connection with the historic life of man. The conception of the Universe and of human life which the Bible sets forth, that of the ancient East, became strange to Western peoples after the discoveries and the teaching of Copernicus and Galileo, and the vastly increased scientific and philosophic knowledge of the nineteenth century widened the discrepancy. But by new paths and by new methods the old Bible world is being re-entered. Modern research has done much to restore their original setting to the several parts of the Bible, to explore the relations which existed between Israel and the civilisation around her, and to fill in the outline of history and story with human activity and achievement. Comparative religion and anthropology have elucidated the origin and the content of

many of the religious ideas and institutions of both Testaments. The "vessels" of God's inspiration are thus seen afresh to be "earthen vessels," and the world in which men sought God, and found Him, the world of their everyday experience—that world where, now as then, vice and virtue, superstition and devotion, are inextricably interwoven, and where the religious spirit is found, as Dean Inge says, "twining itself round any support which will give it hospitality, entangling itself inextricably with other interests which have little to do with it, nay often clinging to a dead stump." This close connection between Divine Self-manifestation with common life is ever difficult to grasp. Our failure to make a living connection is everywhere apparent. "A Religion for Sundays" is one of the commonest forms of English belief. The conception of a "Bible World" is everywhere popular. We draw lines between the religious and the profane, circumscribing the Spirit of God in time and place, oblivious to His presence where our prejudices or our philosophy do not await Him. It is an ancient temptation of the human mind. "Is not this Jesus," they said, "the carpenter's son, whose father and mother we know? How can He now say I am come down out of Heaven?" The more assured results of modern Biblical scholarship have been made widely accessible, though much yet remains to be done before all teachers can easily reach them. As this knowledge is assimilated, surely Scripture teaching will gain new life and the world of the spirit a new reality.

"And lo, Christ walking on the water,  
Not of Genesareth, but Thames."

The modern understanding of the nature and meaning of inspiration is full of fruitful suggestion for the teacher of Scripture. The mechanical pre-modern doctrine of inspiration appears to have been in part due to the oblivion in which the work of the writing prophets so long lay. Now the prophetic spirit is recognised as the central force in the evolution of the religion of the Israelites. In the experience of the prophets, the activity of God in human affairs and the power of man's response to His revelation are illustrated more vividly and with a greater wealth of detail and incident than in any other part of the Old Testament. By word and by symbol the prophets drove home to men their characters as the mouthpiece of God. In a concrete image Ezekiel eats the message on the roll, which he will afterwards declare. First they absorbed the message, the "Word," into themselves, and then set it forth in phrase or imagery that the people would clearly understand. The Spirit of God was discerned in the glowing fusion of intellect and character, and His power was manifest in the depth of the prophet's spiritual insight and in the comprehension of his practical wisdom. His message was the very "Word of God." When inspiration tended to be regarded primarily not as the quality of a living personality, but rather as the attribute of the written "word" in its stability, mechanical views were inevitable. "God is not the God of the dead but of the living." Here again the way lies open for important advance. Old Testament teaching which is carried on beyond the age of childhood is meaningless without an intelligent study of the prophets. Such a study must go forward

from the lives of the Old Testament prophets, and embrace the New Testament, especially the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, so that the continuity between the two Covenants be preserved. Illustration from and comparison with the prophets of the Early Church and succeeding ages are also important. The meaning of inspiration and its deep significance for all the children of God may thus in some measure be grasped through the lives and the words of actual men and women. The age of adolescence, the age in which such a study is most appropriate, is marked by an awakening of life. Youth becomes conscious of its powers, and as life opens before them it is immensely important for their right religious development that boys and girls should realise that "life abounding" is a mark of God's inspiration. Further, this is the age of adventure and experiment, and the heart of youth is ever "stirred as by a trumpet" by the stories of great deeds and noble aspirations. But so is it with the adventures of the soul. The search for the living God is stimulated as we trace, though from afar, the footsteps of those who have ascended unto the Hill of the Lord. Our Scripture teaching at present too often fails to give any adequate conception of the work of the Holy Spirit. A new orientation affecting both method and subject-matter is required.

Slowly our Scripture teaching is being released from the bondage of ignorance, hesitation, and mistrust, but many difficulties remain, most pressing perhaps the concurrent treatment of the two Testaments. In the New Testament the teaching of Christ, in the Old Testament that legal or formal conception of

religion so natural to men, and so readily believed by them to be the most acceptable to their God. "How long will ye halt between two opinions?" said Elijah; "if the Lord be God, follow Him, but if Baal, then follow him." Now still do we halt between two opinions. Is it Faith or Fear? Thus inquired a group of writers on the religious outlook of the day.<sup>1</sup> Is our religion that of Christ or that of the Old Testament? Newspaper controversies on Sunday Labour, or "Reprisals," or whatever the current topic may be, display a deep confusion of standards in the public mind. But do not the form and the method of our religious teaching too often allow confused standards to grow up from the very first in the minds of the pupils? In large numbers of elementary schools the teaching of the Ten Commandments takes a prominent place, and frequently the Bible stories are grouped round them in illustration. Although the positive duty which is implied in each commandment may be carefully taught, yet the emphasis for the scholars who memorise and frequently repeat them finally lies on the commandments themselves. Is there not here one reason at least for the fact that to large numbers of young people religion presents itself as a negative thing which if admitted may kill their joy in life? "The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life." We shall only teach the Old Testament with safety when we have assimilated something of the teaching of Christ and can then select those words of the Old Testament which are of "spirit and of life." The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews,

<sup>1</sup> "Faith or Fear?" Macmillan, 3s. 6d. net.



who had so learnt of Christ, looking back over the history of his nation saw in it a great panorama of the power of faith. To him the whole past history of his race moved, led by the heroic venture of its leaders, towards the unknown consummation of their aspirations—Christ. To him the Old Testament taught Thou shalt—through faith subdue kingdoms, do righteousness, obtain promises, stop the mouths of lions, quench the violence of fire, escape the edge of the sword, out of weakness be made strong, wax valiant in fight, turn to flight the armies of the aliens. Their achievements he dwelt upon, not their failures. To those who loved much and wrought much to find their city much would be forgiven; yet to masses of our children “Thou shalt not” is the abiding memory of their Old Testament teaching.

Possibly Stanley Hall is right in maintaining that the Old Testament stories are the proper material for young children, but the New Testament for adolescents. The finer emotions of self-sacrifice and compassion, he contends, awaken in adolescence; it is also the age of loyalty and devotion. Those who are just becoming conscious of life’s awakening power can best hear the call of Christ, “Follow Me,” and acknowledge Him as their Lord and Master. But the little children of Nazareth loved Christ, and our children also love Him when He comes to them in intimate and in human ways, helping them to do good and to fight evil, interested in their concerns, and watching over them from His place on high. We cannot limit children to Old Testament stories, but neither can we omit them. We must thus select our material with insight

and subordinate all to the great end of Old Testament teaching, that they "may know the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture": the saying is already strange to us. The metaphor was characteristic of an age which could formulate its beliefs succinctly and with a clear outline—an age, even then swiftly passing, which felt none of the uncertainty we feel as to the exact intellectual content in our religious faith. But surely it is well we instinctively avoid such a phrase. Recall for a moment the use our Lord made of the word Rock. What was the Rock on which He would build His Church? Was it not on the budding, growing faith of St. Peter? To whom the venture, though wholly heroic, was yet almost premature, and in part obscure, for was he not even after this to deny his Lord thrice? And yet that venture was stronger than any rock, for it had in it the strength of a living will. Are we not gradually, and painfully, learning to give up the search for a rock of changeless and formulated conclusion and to substitute for it a juster and more Christian conception of the search for the living God? It is then of immense importance that young people should grasp that we are not, in this age, engaged in a confused retreat from the defence of hitherto impregnable truths, but that we are engaged in a movement forward towards positions of vantage which were never occupied in the past. The faith once committed to the saints lies not behind us outworn, but before us unexhausted, and the promise of the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth is ever renewed. The reality of religious education does not

lie in the exactitude of the definitions which it may impart, though in religious knowledge, as in all knowledge, precision of statement is important in crystallising and summarising experience. Rather it lies in its power to inspire young people in that personal adventure of faith which finds both its starting-point and its goal, its way and its life, in Christ, "who will dwell in their hearts through faith." To this great end the ideas which the school Scripture lesson imparts must make their appropriate contribution, slight though it may be. Such ideas must above all give a right outlook upon the two great forces of science and tradition. We do irreparable harm if we allow young people to regard faith and freedom as antagonistic. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The life of faith is the life of freedom. But to the young adventure is a necessity, not security; to feel that life is greater than they know, not to compass it with definitions. We fail in faith if we distrust the divine hunger and thirst which are the birthright of youth; rather "Blessed are they, for they shall be filled." Let us go forward then with courage, nourishing in youth the search for truth and the joy of adventure, confident meantime not in our ability to meet their questions, or to solve their doubts, but in our belief that those who seek the truth will be found of God.











